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SEPTEMBER, 1958

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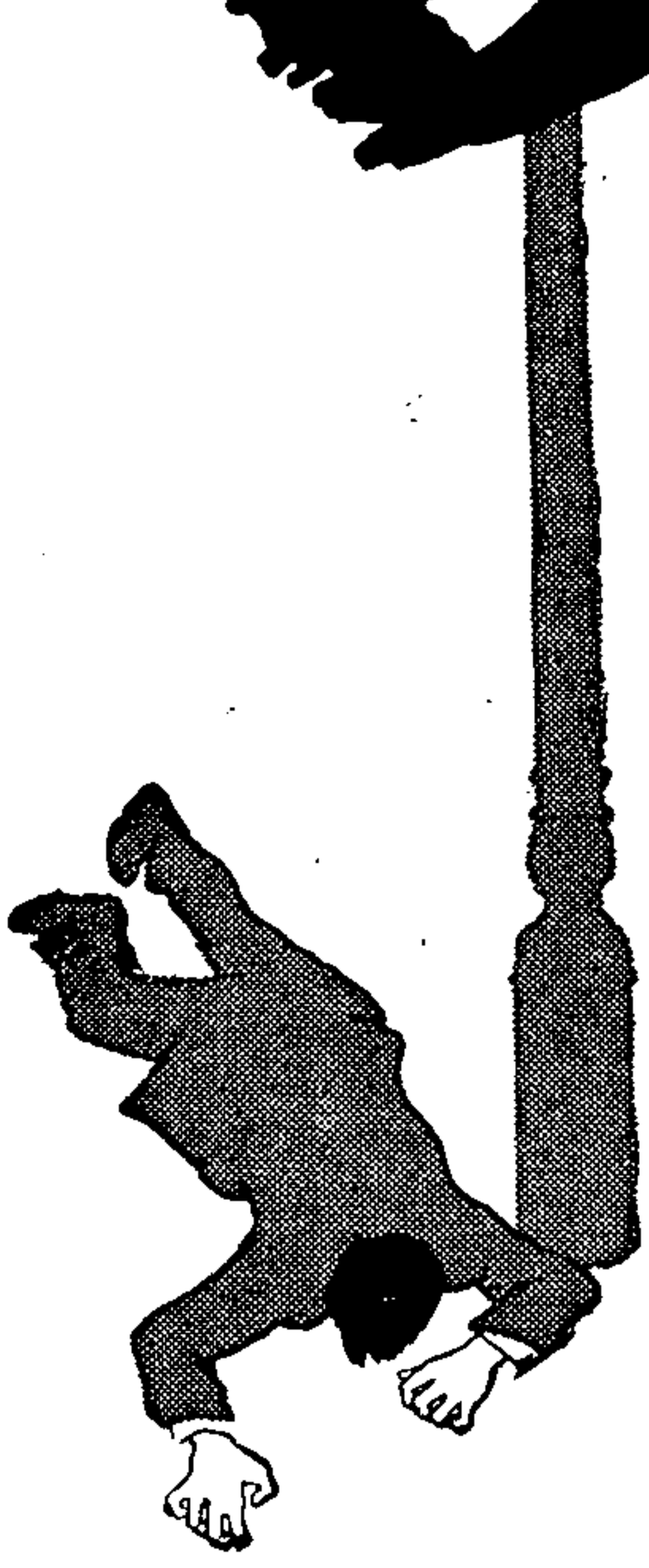

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ARGOSY

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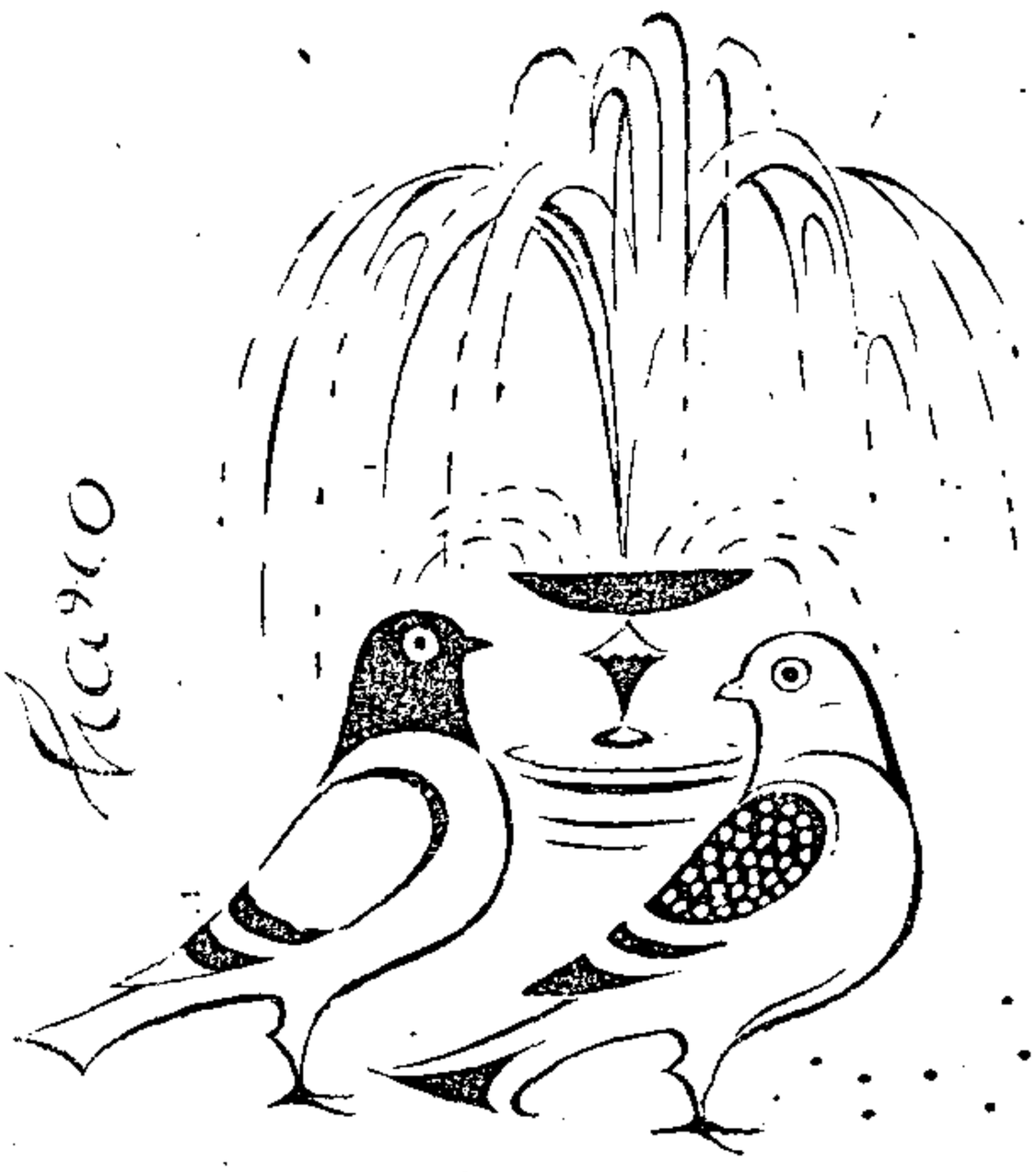


WATCH HIM AT WORK:

RAY BRADBURY

WINE FROM THE TAP

WHAT does it feel like to be Ray Bradbury? Judging from a talk with Mr. Bradbury when he dropped into the Argosy offices, it feels pretty good—he finds the world a big, friendly place full of interesting people and absorbing things clamouring to be written about.

Bradbury is young—still sailing through his thirties—middle-height, brown-haired, horn-rimmed, and enthusiastic. He vibrates with energy indeed, like one of the more benevolent machines in his own stories. Last summer he whisked his whole family to London—wife, three small daughters aged seven, six, and two respectively, and their Nannie; he would like to do it again, but not this year as there's another member of the family on the way; a son, who knows?

London enchanted the Bradbury family; Ray's own favourite spot was the National Gallery—" I had to keep going back to look at the Bellinis and the Leonardo *Virgin of the Rocks*; and of course the fountains in Trafalgar Square were wonderful."

At present Bradbury is engaged on a whole sheaf of projects, principal among them the film he is making with Carol Reed from a story out of his *Fahrenheit* 451. It takes place in the future, three or four years from now, and is concerned with a white couple, survivors of an atomic war, left stranded among the primitive inhabitants of a Latin-American village. The story —not science fiction apart from its starting premise—deals with the relationships developing and evolving from this predicament. The film will be shot in Mexico, some time early in 1959.

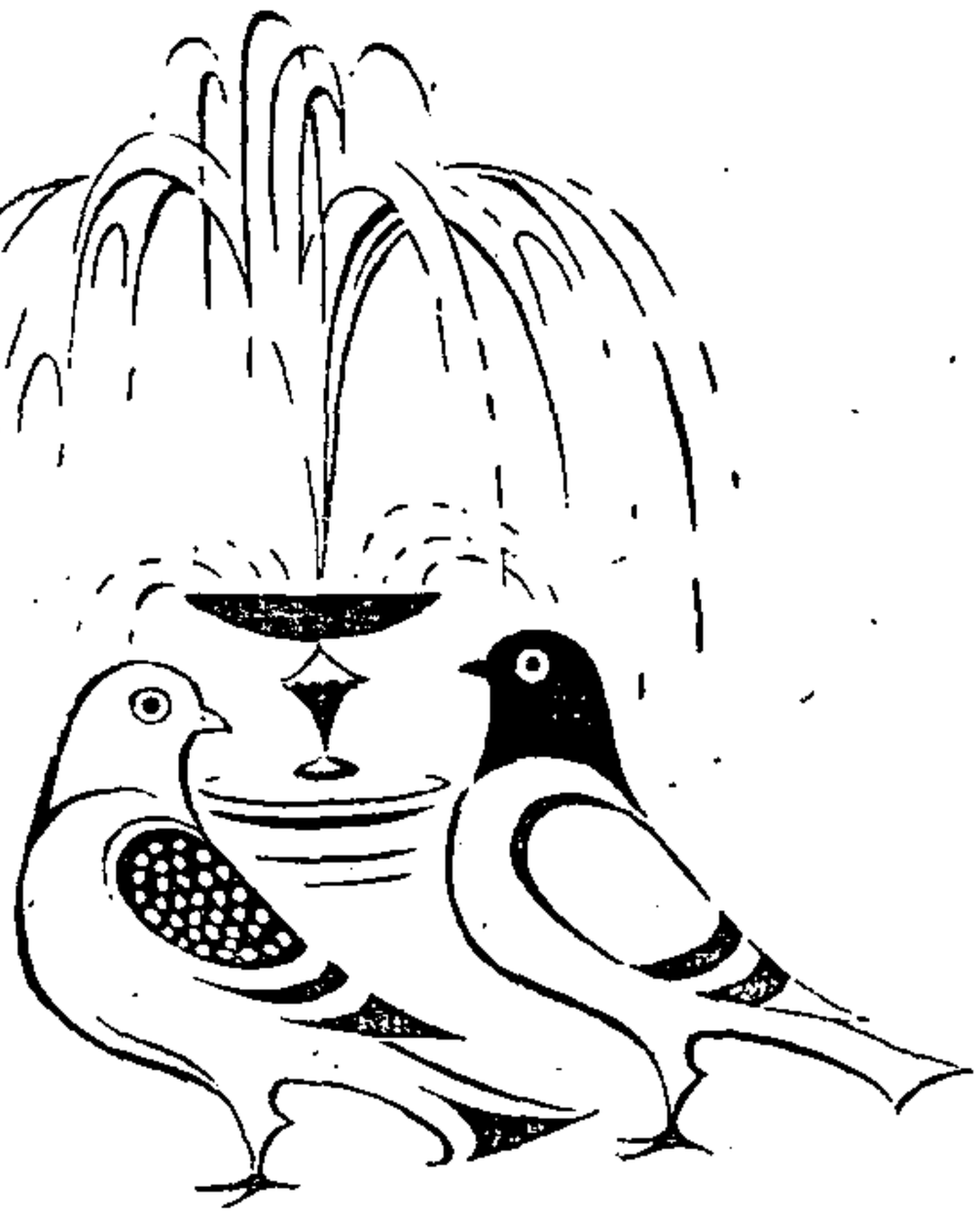
Other work on hand includes a trilogy of novels. *Dandelion Wine*, first of the three, came out last October. It is the story of a year in the life of a middle-west boy and his home town. The second book in the series is a sequel, same boy, same town, a year later. And the third book will view the identical town through the lens of fantasy, so that the characters, even if they are the same, will probably not be recognizable.

" Every month of my life," Bradbury said in parenthesis, " I like to write three stories, one fantastic, one sf, and one straight."

Bradbury is also blazing a trail into the uncharted world of musical sf. With Charles Laughton and his wife, he is working on a science-fiction operetta which it is hoped will reach Broadway this year. It is gay, light, and lasts about half an hour, and is to be called *Happy Anniversary* 2116 A.D. Bradbury is doing the book, Ray Henderson the music. The next step after that is to be a full-length science-fiction musical called *Rocket Summer* which, he reckons, will be the first sf opera ever created, and the first successful one too, he hopes.

Asked about his writing methods, Ray Bradbury grinned engagingly and said, " I write because I love writing. I'm not a thinker; if an idea comes I'm delighted and just leave it to grow. My logic is all in my emotions." Most of his stories are triggered off by word associations, or some odd juxtaposition of ideas—" A harp comes into my mind and I begin asking myself, What do I want to write about a harp? " One of his best-known stories arose from a visit to a Coney Island Hall of Mirrors with some friends.

" I suppose Ray is thinking up one of his stories about this," somebody said and, sure enough, a story was bubbling up in his mind. " They've never forgiven me! " he said. " When the idea for a story hits me, all I have to do is ask the characters what they want —I guess inspiration is the only word for it," he added with the humility that a fine author feels in the presence of whatever it is that takes hold of him and makes him write.



He has been writing science fiction ever since he was twelve, and has evolved a unique, richly coloured dream

world in which many of his readers must, by now, feel almost as at home as he does. He finds sf the perfect medium for expressing the idea he feels so profoundly: that humanity is now facing the challenge of science. We can advance, let inventions help us, create the good life and make every town into a place of gaiety and grace—or we can let machinery get the upper hand, as in *The Pedestrian*, one of Bradbury's chillingly grim stories in which the only man who won't watch television is whisked off to gaol by a fully automatic police car.

Asked whether his stories reflected personal experience in any degree, Ray Bradbury said regretfully that he hasn't encountered the supernatural at all himself—not so much as hitched a ride on a flying saucer—but he did once, while walking through a picture gallery, see a lithograph illustrating a story he hadn't yet finished, and from that arose his association with Joe Mugnani, who has illustrated several of his books. It is impossible not to feel, though, that somewhere the flying saucer is stabled that will one day give Mr. Bradbury a lift. As he says, " When some men turn on a tap they expect water to come out. When I turn it, I *hope that wine will come out.*"

Some day, perhaps, he will see wine coming out of the fountains in Trafalgar Square.

JOHN SILVER

Horatio

COCKLE-GATHERER

Suddenly, I saw what he was watching

BY CLEDWYN HUGHES

ONLY the young naval lieutenant and one fair-haired rating sat on the black wet rocks, among the mats of seaweed, and with the great red-rusted sphere of the mine between them.

The strengthening sunlight of the spring morning gleamed on the new long-handled steel spanners they were using on the corroded bolts of the detonator-casing. Sometimes they paused, and walked a few yards away to where each had his lighted cigarette laid on a shelf of rock out of reach of the strong sea wind. Then they would walk back again to the mine, blowing blue clouds of smoke to the wind-torn clouds of the sky.

They never said much to one another, but they shared one cigarette lighter which they kept in an iron chest of equipment. Once in a while they would act in unison and move a spanner on a particularly difficult nut and bolt. After that, as the fair-haired rating unwound the thread, the young lieutenant would break a barnacle off the casing of the mine and toss it at one of the floating gulls on the foam-specked receding tide.

High up, and quite far away, I was among a small crowd behind the rope barrier on the cliff top, watching the disposal squad at work. Their lorry was behind us, and the rest of the naval party were close to it. Some were watching their lieutenant and the rating at work; some were calmly making tea; others were uncoiling nylon ropes from a locker.

Even as I stood on the trampled heather of the cliff summit, near to the top of the concrete stairway that led to the shore, I saw clearly the last bolt being removed. It had given trouble and the two naval men had had to shear off the old steel with gently-insistent metal-cutters.

That done, the officer threw the bolt upwards, in a playful gesture, towards a tall girl in a tweed suit and walking-shoes who was standing by my side in the crowd.

The girl laughed almost cheerfully, and waved a small white hand at the lieutenant. With her other hand she moved some wind-blown strands of dark hair from her face and she spoke to me, a stranger.

"Oh, thank heavens, only another moment and Tony'll have the detonator out."

"You know the officer?" I asked.

"We're getting married tomorrow. And after his leave he's being transferred to a lecturing job at Dartmouth. I'll be terribly glad when he's finished this sort of work. These old rusty mines, washed up so many years after the war, are much worse than fresh eggs would be. Tony calls all mines eggs."

I nodded and answered, "The war's been over for thirteen years now. You'd think that there'd be no more mines to come up, wouldn't you?"

She wasn't listening to me, but was looking down to the far small figures of her man and his helper. There, in the sun, they were trying to lever off the rusted metal of the detonator-cover from the main body of the mine.

"This is the worst part," she said to me, the stranger. "Once Tony can get his hand in, it'll be almost all right."

I said nothing, realizing that perhaps some mystery of future happiness or sorrow was being decided here in these few moments of sea-touched time.

It had been a curious and worrying experience. Now that it was all coming to a climax, I could look back on it with a little more tranquillity than had been possible during the night.

On the little grass-and-gorse headland, to the west of the disposal squad, stood my home. The beach of sand and shingle towards the east was my private foreshore. The mine lay quite near my front door. If it blew up, then my house would be dust and rubble.

It was yesterday evening, in the dusk of the spring day, that I had gone out for my usual walk along the shore. There was a rising moon, a sea-wind, and an ebbing tide. As I went along, from sand to cliff outcrop and back to sand again, I looked ahead to the small grassy headland.

There was a man there, unreal as a scarecrow against the failing light of the spring sunset. As I went nearer I noticed he was wearing waders, an oilskin jacket, and an old sou'wester; he carried two empty cockle-baskets. There were ample beds of these commercial delicacies beyond the headland, on the sand at low-water mark.

He called out to me, "A lovely evening."

I walked nearer over the wet sand planed smooth by the receding tide, and answered, "Yes, indeed. A fine night for your sort of work."

The man hesitated a moment before replying, "Oh yes."

I went on, " But you'll have to wait a while, surely, before the cockle-beds come into sight? "

The man took off his sou'wester in an uneasy gesture, the cockle-baskets on their straps swinging and creaking from his shoulders. He paused, and looked out to the green distances of the Channel. There was a tanker passing, low in the water. As he stared out to sea I looked closer at him.

I sensed some uneasiness about him, some feeling of anxiety. I followed the direction of his gaze. And then, suddenly, I saw what he was watching.

" Look, man," I said, " look at that mine out there."

He peered more closely at the black shape, its contour well up in the water. It was as if he wouldn't see it. Then I went out and stood by his side and pointed directly.

" There," I said. " There, twenty yards out."

" Oh yes," he answered, without much concern.

" It'll get left by the tide," I went on. " High and dry in a quarter of an hour or so. It could be very dangerous indeed. In the water they seem to be safe unless they strike against a pier or a rock, or are borne down by a ship. But out of the water, on a solid foundation, they are as touchy as hell."

He murmured a reply, " I don't know much about them, really."

" This means the end of your cockle-gathering, anyway. The coastguards will hurry down here as soon as the alarm is given, and the police as well. The naval people will come in the morning to make it harmless."

" Is it all that dangerous? " asked the man.

" If it was tipped over on the sand by a gale, it could blow my house down there to blazes. It could go off just because of vibration caused by a train at the village station."

" Oh," answered the cockle-gatherer. " Oh, I see."

" And so, will you give the alarm, please? You'll have to give up the cockle-gathering for tonight, and you'll be passing the coastguard-hut, won't you? "

He hesitated again.

" I'm not going through the village. I shan't be going near the coastguard look-out, or the police station. I'm from up the coast, watchman at the holiday camp."

" But the camp's closed," I said.

" I am a caretaker," he answered swiftly.

He started to walk away towards the steps leading to the cliff top, and I shouted after him, " So I can't rely on you to give the alarm? "

He shook his head and broke into a run in the dusk and the moonlight, his loose cockle-baskets bouncing one against the other.

I shouted after him, " It's not all that dangerous. It won't be high and dry for another fifteen minutes at least."

But he seemed panic-stricken or frightened and, as he reached the steps, he unbuckled the holding straps of the cockle-baskets and let them fall into a gully among driftwood and rotting seaweed. I thought he was indeed in a panic, but decided he would probably return for the baskets when the danger was gone.

I walked in the other direction and stood on a small promontory until I could see, in the sharp silver light of the full moon, that the mine was left high and dry by the ebbing tide. Then I climbed to the top of the cliff and gave the news to the coastguard watch. They phoned the local police and, within half an hour, the mine had been roped to stout stakes in the sand, the path had been barred with wire and red warning lamps, and a constable was on duty for the night on the cliff top behind a protective wall made of hastily-filled sandbags.

The authorities wouldn't allow me to stay in my own house, so I slept at a boarding-house in the village. It wasn't an easy sleep, either, for I feared that with the night tide the mine might explode, and my house and possessions disintegrate with it.

With the morning, the mine was still there. It had risen with the night tide and had settled again, securely held by the ropes and the stakes.

And now, this spring morning, with the honest light of day on the world, my neighbours and I were watching the young naval lieutenant and the fair-haired rating at work. The rest of the squad had helped with the initial work of moving the mine, most gently, from the sand to a small rocky platform at the base of the cliffs. The idea was that if it should blow up there the cliff face would take the blast.

As we watched, the young lieutenant, who was Tony to the girl by my side, took out a small tool from a hip pocket. He flicked off the edges of rust from the detonator-cap; the noise was heard like a woodpecker above the waves.

The girl grasped my arm. " I've never had to watch him before. I've been here all week, making plans—and now this."

" It'll all be O.K.," I said. " All O.K., he'll be at Dartmouth after this."

She made no answer. With a slightly impatient gesture the officer motioned the rating to stand back; then he forced the cap away from the main body of the mine.

The cap broke away with a clang. The officer threw it into the sea and a herring gull swam round the eddies where it sank, as if for food.

"His hand in," whispered the girl. "His hand in and it'll all be over."

The lieutenant reached into the mine. There was silence, except for the calling of children at eleven o'clock play in the village school in the far distance behind the cliffs.

The rating was standing at ease, his hands behind his back. Then, with a sudden gesture, the officer took out his hand, shook his head, and said something to the rating.

"Oh," said the girl. "Oh, it must be a dangerous type they haven't met before."

The rating and the lieutenant took a spanner each and attacked the main rim-bolting of the mine. They worked carelessly, haphazardly, almost joyfully.

In a few minutes they had the mine opened into two halves, and were lifting up the upper part. At the same time the officer lifted a hand and gaily beckoned to the girl on the cliff. He shouted, his voice made a whisper by the wind and the distance, "Come on down, Jill. Come on down."

The girl ducked under the wire barrier. All of us, police and coastguards and the rest of the naval men, followed her down the steps and over the sands to where the mine lay on the rocks.

The two men had opened wide the mine-casing. We crowded round, wondering at the lack of danger.

It was the naval officer who, explaining to his fiancée, made everything clear to us. "Look, Jill, look! This mine-casing is full of Swiss watches."

He held up a bundle of material, shook it, and a parcel of strapless watches, wrapped in transparent but water-tight oiled silk, fell out.

"Hundreds inside here," he said. "Real smart smugglers' job. Watches were as safe as houses in this wrapping. Safe from vibration, safe from damp."

The girl, Jill, was tousling the hair of the man who would be her husband the next day.

He grinned at her and said, "I'll have to get on to the Customs people. Some smart lad's girl friend won't be getting her share of this, anyway."

He strolled away with the girl, leaving a Petty Officer to mount guard on the dismantled mine and its strange cargo.

I watched them chattering away as they shared a cigarette. There was nothing much on earth, now, that could stop their happiness. After a while I went home, for the anthracite cooker would be out and the cat would want an explanation of my absence.

But as I went on my way I looked round once or twice,

wondering if that man who last night had been waiting so patiently for the mine, was about again. But he was not to be seen. Perhaps, at this moment, he too was opening up a mine in some quiet cove, his cockle-baskets ready for the haul of duty-free goods. But I bear him no enmity; he was an adventurer pitting his brains against authority, and for once he had lost.

But he had, for all his dishonesty, made strong and infinitely sincere and serene the love of Jill for the lieutenant called Tony. They had dared the finality of death together, and annealed their love in the most terrible of fires.

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"I'm not going to tell your fortune because you are going to refuse to pay me."

MISS MURPHY

In the quiet evening, this car was looking for trouble

BY CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG

MISS MURPHY often made an opportunity to be in the corridor when the four of them were due to come by. She knew their time-tables. She could anticipate.

She was to be found, looking vague, with papers in her hand, just turning in to Mr. Madden's office, or perhaps just leaving her own, and she would hesitate and frown and pretend to be preoccupied, but her pale green eyes under dust-coloured lashes would secretly watch them. After they had gone by, she would go about her business, concealing the depth of her pleasure.

As Secretary of the school, she ought to have been, without exception, on the side of society and the group. But when the four of them went by in their inevitable formation, something lively and stubborn and sly, something that contradicted everything she lived by, lifted up a voice to say inside her, " Nevertheless, this is magnificent! "

Miss Murphy was a little woman who had looked about the same age for the last fifteen years, ever since she had lost the bloom of being very young. She was a pale redhead, with pale freckled skin. The flesh of her face did not cling cleanly to the bones but was rather doughy and lumpy as if the sculptor had thrown the clay upon the framework in careless preparation, and then had never found time for any refinement of his work.

Miss Murphy was everything law-abiding, anxious, and reliable. She was destined to be " good old Miss Murphy," and she knew this and was even rather pleased about it. What in her responded? What clapped impious applause in her heart—to see the four of them go by?

Miss Murphy was not, of course, the only one who watched them in their habit of march—that strange phenomenon—and pretended not to see it. New students were sometimes impelled to jeer in astonishment, but they soon learnt that it was better not to notice.

The teachers, the office staff, the adults, deplored but could not forbid this ritual. Four seniors walked by. That was all.

In their passage they did nothing illegal. But they did something. And they did it down the long corridors of the school between classes, whenever all four were able to travel together in the same direction. And in the school grounds, sometimes as they arrived in the morning, having made an unseen rendezvous; and every day as they departed—the four of them, the girl, and the boys.

On a spring Tuesday, just before the end of the fourth period, Miss Murphy found herself compulsively gathering up a pile of record cards. In a moment the bell would ring, the individual cells of the orderly hive would erupt, the periodic roar of voices and thump of feet and rush of bodies exchanging positions would occur. Miss Murphy knew she was deliberately waiting the necessary minutes before the four of them would be going past her door. She rested her wrists upon the edge of her desk, the record cards loose but ready in her hands, and her quiet waiting was like meditation before a dubious god.

When the clock had moved enough, she rose, she opened her door. She did not step out into the humming traffic. She stood still, and began to slip and sort the cards.

They were coming, because the hum lessened. The four of them travelled in a shell of lesser noise.

It was always exactly the same. First by a step came the girl, Ivy Voll. She was tall. She had a small head held high on a neck that was disproportionately thick. Her forehead was rounded and high, and her dark hair went straight back from this bold brow to hang in a limp mass between her shoulder-blades. She walked proudly on small feet that almost crossed over each other to follow a straight line and create a swagger in her narrow hips. Ivy Voll looked dead ahead with eyes like a sleep-walker's. This was the strange, the subtly evil thing. She walked as if, although she led the pack, she was also its prisoner.

A step behind her and a step to the left loomed Stan Fuller, constituting himself a wall at her back, taller than she, a fierce burly boy. His dark frown went over her left shoulder to warn any interfering thing from their immediate path.

Ranging on the flanks were Ross and Tentor. Greyhounds both, they mooched loosely along, their heads held forward, restless, turning, fending, guarding. Ross, with his long, straight, slicked fair hair, his long predatory nose, his narrow eyes, walked on the left, his feet level with Stan's; but the forward bend of his torso and neck guarded the girl. Tentor, a darker version with a nose less sharp, and eyes that were always puffed and sleepy—as if he never slept at night but engaged instead in some nameless dissipation—Tentor ranged on the right flank, and in the

pattern, walked on the halfway line, a bit ahead of the boys, and half a step behind the girl.

In this pecúliar phalanx they moved, they swept along. If anyone chanced or dared to stand in their path the whole formation could veer without altering their relative positions. The girl simply kept stepping in that strange, proud, blind way and her three escorts kept bulking, just behind, as if the four of them defied all that might break them apart even when, as a unit and quite flexibly, they yielded and they threaded through. The sweep and rhythm, the rigidity of their march—and something in their cold eyes—made it unnecessary for them to swerve very often.

When they had gone by, Miss Murphy feigned a decision, closed her hand about the cards, and turned towards the Headmaster's office. The little shivering ride along her nerves was like a drug she took in secret.

Was there not integrity in them? In their very scorn? In the imperial air itself, the nerve it took, the calm arrogance of their strange and self-sufficient alliance, the very coldness of their eyes? Was this not somehow magnificent? What would it be to live like that? To have no truck with a thousand nervous little conformities, to resign from the anxiety to please those in authority, to walk so proudly, to be like Ivy Voll, Queen and Head Slave of however small a kingdom, however evil? What could goodness, civilization, propriety offer that could compare?

Mr. Madden came up behind her. "Coming to see me? After you, Miss Murphy."

She had an uneasy feeling that she had been caught this time.

The Headmaster sat down behind his desk. A thin man, he was, with a stiff body and stiff white hair. He took off his glasses and massaged his eyes. "How I wish we could reach those four," he sighed, "before we lose them. Have you any suggestions, Miss Murphy?"

"I? Why no, I'm afraid not," she said, knowing that she had indeed been caught since he spoke directly to what he had known was in her mind. "I have these for your file, sir."

He did not even look at the cards. "Have you ever tried to get at them individually?"

"I think everyone has tried," she said in her bright everyday voice.

Privately she didn't think it was any use. For, taken one by one, neither the girl nor any of the boys was formidable. Ivy Voll was of no importance in the school's closed society. She was an indifferent student, and did not compete in any of the usual ways. The boys were none of them athletes.

It was their alliance alone that gave them identity. And the alliance was old. She seemed to remember its taking shape during the last term of their second year. Now they were seniors. So the alliance was old and it was strong, and Miss Murphy did not think that Mr. Madden or any of his staff could break it up before the spring came.

"If we do not help them . . ." he said, and shook his head.

Help them? thought Miss Murphy daringly. Help them to what? To obscurity and humble place? After this strange, almost mystic thing that gives them status?

"I am asking your advice because it seems to me—I don't know how to put this, Miss Murphy, but it seems to me that your approach may be a little different."

Miss Murphy flushed. "It's true that I have tried very hard to understand, from their point of view," she said piously.

"Yes?" he said.

Sometimes Miss Murphy shuddered to think of any possible point of view for the girl, Ivy, or of her possible relationship with those three males, which could scarcely be that of three parfit gentil knights to fair lady. But this was only one facet of the problem. Not much had been proved against the four this year, although much was believed and even more suspected. They were almost certainly still vandals.

The year before they had been caught twice and lectured and let off. This year they had learnt how not to leave any clues behind them. They were bullies, of course, and had been openly so last year. This year they were more skilful, and used pressure and threat instead of blows.

Nevertheless, Miss Murphy said earnestly, "Mr. Madden, separately they aren't significant. They have welded themselves into this unit because it gives them meaning."

"I don't like the meaning," he interrupted sharply.

"No, no, of course not," she said hastily, "but just the same —they have some qualities we can admire."

"What do you consider those to be?" the Headmaster asked flatly.

"They are loyal to each other."

"Are they? Have they ever been tested?"

"They show," said Miss Murphy, "a certain courage. Courage in itself should be worth something."

"Many criminals have courage," said Mr. Madden, "and often they have power, and power is often glamorous."

It was a fair hit and Miss Murphy knew she was flushing. "And these four have achieved a certain amount of power and glamour, pretty young and pretty cheap," he went on. "Tell me

now to jolt them out of that, and make them substitute the kind of power and glamour that you can work for for fifty years."

Miss Murphy found herself thinking, Yes, you can work for it, and hard, for fifty years or for a hundred years, and never get it. And she thought, Just the same, just the same, there is something strong and bold and magnificent about taking it. Now.

"I've talked to their people myself," the Headmaster was saying wearily, "and it gets us nowhere. The parents simply do not know. Ivy's mother and father think of her as a perfectly ordinary young girl, not too bright, not too enthusiastic, not doing too well in her studies, but 'popular.' Lord help us!

"Stan's father thinks he is grown-up and is quite complacent about it. 'Let the boy alone,' he says.

"Ross's folks are financially harassed this year and they are so frantically absorbed in their troubles that the boy goes unnoticed. He merely appends to them.

"As for Tentor, he lives with grandparents who write him off in one sentence. He is seventeen. Once they were seventeen and they survived. They expect him to do the same."

He sighed and raised his eyes to her. "So they've come up like weeds. And we have failed with them. I wish you could tell me how to change the basic wrong and rotten thing."

"They defy the group," she stammered. "They don't conform."

He stared at her and said, "My soul, my soul—if that were all!" Then he got out of his chair shaking off that moment of despair. "I will tell you this," he said. "The moment, if it comes, that they are fairly caught, I will do all I can to blacken their records. I will feed them into the hands of juvenile experts, and police psychiatrists. I can afford no more weak and hopeful wishes about these four. There isn't time."

He smiled at her to let down the tension. "Thanks, anyway," he said gently.

Miss Murphy went away in some confusion.

Just the same, just the same, her mind kept saying. The four of them are so strong. The wide world, she thought, might use them, just as they were—out there where the wicked sometimes flourish like the green bay tree.

She did not think the school could change them now. She herself would miss the sight of them. The school would miss something when, next year, the four would not be back.

Miss Murphy wished she could, in the few weeks remaining, set up a contact for herself. What she had long tried to do was to project towards them the sound, friendly, give-and-take attitude she held towards other students, even as they looked through her

with those icy eyes. They looked through anybody over twenty. Their eyes could pass over you so blankly that you wanted to pinch yourself. Maybe she had been wrong not to betray to them that she felt she truly understood them.

But maybe some day, somehow, she could reach them—without any ulterior motive to change them. There was a wicked excitement to this thought.

Miss Murphy lived with her widowed sister, Daphne, who was not well and, in Miss Murphy's memory, never had been. Daphne was weak and low that evening. She had been sitting in the sun and contracted an irritation of the skin. It was one of the misfortunes of Daphne that nature never did her good. Sun, air, wind, fire, or earth, all these usually turned out to have harmed her super-delicate sensibilities.

About a quarter to nine, Daphne discovered that her peach-coloured pills had run out, the ones she took before bed. So Miss Murphy set forth to the neighbouring chemist, with her normal cheerful willingness to serve.

It was a pleasant evening and she enjoyed walking the short distance, seeing into other people's houses now that the lights were on, glimpsing a bridge game, or a lonely TV watcher, or a family dinner party lingering late at table because everyone was reluctant to leave the quips and the teasings to wash the dishes. Miss Murphy enjoyed all the dear, mild, suburban world.

The little cluster of shops was darkened. Only the chemist was still working. Miss Murphy had a pleasant exchange of commonplaces with the assistant, received her package of pills, and left with a cheerful, " Good night."

But as she drew level with the dark and silent garage, she began to wonder about Daphne's lotion. Was it low, too? From experience Miss Murphy felt she had better ring up home to ask. For the chemist was about to close, it was nearly nine o'clock, and she would not have time to return tonight, and if Daphne were uncomfortable . . .

So Miss Murphy, both kind and shrewd, left the pavement, stepped into the telephone kiosk that stood against the stuccoed wall of the office of the garage.

As she pulled the door shut, the light went out but, after closing the door as best she could, Miss Murphy made nothing of the semi-darkness, which was not very important, and hopefully put in her coin.

Nothing happened. The phone was dead and dumb. It must be out of order. Turning her mind to the prospect of going back and phoning from the chemist's shop itself, Miss Murphy

took a full minute to discover and realize that she could not open the door of the booth. It was out of order, too, in a very stubborn way. She could not get out of the dark phone booth.

She was imprisoned in this upright coffin with no way to telephone for help.

It was a ridiculous situation.

Nine o'clock on a spring evening and Miss Delphine Murphy had locked herself into a telephone booth.

She peered out through the glass, fighting a sudden feeling of suffocation which was purely subjective. She could tell by reflections on the pavement that some of the lights in the chemist's shop were going out. Then she was able to make out the figure of the assistant as he emerged and as he locked the door. Miss Murphy rapped on the glass with the metal clasp of her handbag, making all the noise she decorously could, but he strode away in the opposite direction.

Never in her life before had Miss Murphy been in a position to cry out for help, to lift up her voice. She couldn't decide what to shout. To shout " Help " seemed absurd. It seemed quaint and ridiculous, like something out of a comic strip. Nevertheless, she had to shout something, so she called, " Hi . . . Hi . . . Hi there! "

The assistant vanished into the reaches of the car park at the other side of the chemist's; in a little while his car rattled out into the street and turned to go off the other way, so that it did not pass her.

Now the whole small business section was closed.

Traffic on this street was rather thin. Miss Murphy was not in absolute darkness because the street light was shining down on the garage corner. But neither was she very visible in her little prison, and the passing cars did not notice that the door of the phone booth was shut. Perhaps they could not even see that this was so.

Miss Murphy resolved that she must take the desperate measure of breaking the glass. It was a shock to discover that she could not break it, that the glass was very tough, and had a wire mesh embedded in it. When the heel of her shoe had no more effect than had her elbow, she began to be afraid.

Fear whistled round her head like a bird and lit upon the name of her sister, Daphne. Miss Murphy had the medicine. Daphne was alone and not feeling well and was easily visited by swarms of wild dreads and melodramatic forebodings. Daphne would miss her soon. Daphne would think that something terrible had happened to her. Daphne would know that her sister never, never would deliberately delay her return with

the medicine. So Daphne would be frantic, and to be frantic was very bad for her.

Miss Murphy felt frantic for Daphne's sake. But after a minute or two, she knew she was frantic for herself. She was feeling claustrophobic. How was she going to get out. *Get out* . . . the words began to shout in her consciousness. *Get out.*

She caught herself turning and twisting and pounding unreasonably on the glass when there was no one who could possibly hear her.

Miss Murphy took a hold upon herself and tried to think. The thing to do was to stop someone. There did not seem to be any pedestrians. But there were cars. How could she stop a car?

Peering with her cheek tight on the cold glass, Miss Murphy saw a car come gliding along. It was cruising, going softly. It was not full of stern purpose. She could feel this. It seemed, almost, that this car, in the gentle evening, in the quiet streets of the town, was looking for trouble.

Miss Murphy rapped on the glass and cried, "Hi! Hi! Hi!"

As the car slipped by, she saw who was in it.

Stan Fuller was driving. His was no cheap rattletrap jalopy, but a good-looking, modern, shining, expensive car. It was hard to say how the kids got these cars—they just did. It seemed that the intense desire, the absolute necessity of the young American to own a car generated its own satisfaction.

So Stan Fuller sat behind the wheel; but it was as if the common agreement of the four of them directed the car's cruising, prowling motion. Ivy Voll sat in the middle and on the edge of the front seat, a little forward of the others, as was her assigned position. Tentor sat on her right, watching and guarding. Ross, who belonged on the left, was draped by his arms across the back of the seat behind Stan where he could project his watchfulness to the left, as was his station.

Miss Murphy saw them go by, saw Stan and Ivy hold their heads to look straight forward, saw only Tentor peering to the right where she was so helplessly hidden. The sight of the four of them, on the prowl in a car, briefly intrigued her, but she was not out of her prison and could not think how to get out.

In about four minutes she was astonished to see the car approach once more and from the same direction, as if it had circled.

Then she was thrilled when it rocked gently over the gutter and glided on to the pavement of the garage. It rolled into the shadow of the laundry building that bounded this place. It stopped. The four of them sat there.

Miss Murphy, filled with relief and also with shame to be

caught, and especially by them, in so undignified and ridiculous a situation, tapped primly upon the glass. She called out, "The door is jammed. Stan, would you please try to open it? This is Miss Murphy. Jim Tentor? Ivy?"

They did not appear to hear her.

So Miss Murphy kept on tapping and calling to them, repeating and repeating in a curious suspension of her own attention. She chose not to notice how much time was going by. But at last her wrist weakened and felt tired, and her hand fell, and her voice failed.

She could see their heads. She began to think she could see their cold eyes, their expressions, as cold and baleful as wolves.

She saw Stan put one huge foot up and hang it by the ankle over the far side of the car.

She knew Ross had relaxed, for he had nothing to watch to the left now but the brick wall of the laundry. She saw Tentor, with neck arched, watching the street behind them.

Ivy sat with her head high. Ivy lit a cigarette.

They seemed to have settled themselves, as if this were a drive-in movie. Were they going to sit there and watch Miss Murphy turning in her trap?

She did turn. She revolved in her cage. She tried the phone again. But nothing had happened to put it suddenly and obligingly back in working order. She braced herself to make no more appeals, to wait with some kind of dignity.

But the thought of Daphne came again and she felt her nerve crack, her dignity wash out in rage.

"Listen!" she cried. "Listen to me. My sister is ill. I have her medicine. I must get out. My sister is ill. She needs her medicine. Medicine!" It should have counted, the appeal to medical necessity. It did count among the civilized. Did not planes fly with serums, ambulances race, police clear the way to hospital? The world agreed that medicine must get through.

But the four of them were not moved.

In a kind of last grasp after reason, Miss Murphy supposed she could not be heard. So she stopped her useless noise.

She heard Ross say restlessly, "What d'you say? Shall we push off?"

And Ivy say, "What's the hurry?"

They spoke in ordinary conversational voices. Miss Murphy heard them. Therefore, they had heard everything she had been shouting—every frantic word of hers that still rang in her own ears.

Miss Murphy's head became filled with a red rage.

She sank down, missed the seat, went all the way to the floor

and felt at first an enormous relief. To be so degraded as to sit on a dirty floor and lean her clean forehead upon the grimy glass . . . to give up, to feel the first comforting rush of self-pity. Soon Miss Murphy was weeping.

She would not look at them again. But they were looking at her. They could see her, crumpled where she was. They could even hear her sobbing. A little pride came back. She hushed herself and looked at her watch as best she could. It was twenty-two minutes past nine. Twenty-two minutes had reduced her to this?

She put her chin on her forearm, stared at the back wall of the kiosk and forced her mind to work. The garage opened, she guessed, not much earlier than eight in the morning. That, then, was her earliest firm hope of release.

Now she trembled and felt ill. She could endure. She must endure. But it was horrifying and primitive; it called upon reserves she had not used for years, if ever. Long shudders of rage were going up and down her spine. She must not think, for even one moment, of the four of them or she might begin to pound her head upon the glass and hurt herself.

Then she heard an engine start. Were they going? She would not look. Then she heard a scream of brakes. A car had come. She heard a voice crying in concern for her, "Hey, lady! Gee—I'm sorry! Look, I'm getting you out right away. What a shame!"

She looked then and saw a man beyond the glass who had a tool in his hands. She struggled to her feet feeling weary and soiled, and she heard the wonderful crunching of breaking glass, and then she was free.

The man owned the garage. "That's an awful thing to happen," he said, supporting her with his kind strong arm. "How long were you in there? I got here as soon as I could. I had to put some clothes on, and I had to come all the way across town. It took me about twenty minutes. I'm so sorry."

Miss Murphy, standing in the open air, looked towards the laundry building. No car was there. They had vanished.

She heard him say, "The minute the girl rang me I came as fast as I could."

"The minute . . . who . . . rang you?"

"Some girl, name of Ivy Voll."

"Rang you? Twenty minutes ago?"

"That's right. Are you O.K.?" He thought she might feel faint. He led her to his car. "I want to wedge this door so that nobody else gets into trouble. Then I'll take you home," he promised.

" Yes, my sister . . . her medicine, you see."

Miss Murphy got weakly into the man's car and sat there, and the cold air sharpened the cold of the sweat at her hairline. Then they had learnt how to do that. They *had* conformed. They *had* acted to save her. And the group would so reckon—that they had saved her.

Then, if they sat and watched for twenty minutes, and did not tell her so, but watched her suffering, it was too subtle and refined a cruelty to count. And it was not because they were so cold and so callous that they did not recognize her suffering. Nor that they were too young, too self-centred, or too ignorant. On the contrary. They not only recognized it, they prolonged it deliberately. And they enjoyed it.

This was the basic wrong and rotten thing.

When she reached home, her sister Daphne looked up from the novel in which she had become lost. " What kept you, Delphine? " asked Daphne, lazily. And then jealously, " I suppose it's nice out."

" Very nice," said Miss Murphy.

In the morning, soon after the first bell rang, a message came that called Miss Murphy into Mr. Madden's office. When she arrived, she found his room was full. There was a man who could be nothing on earth but a police officer. And standing in formation, but like culprits before judgment, were the four.

Miss Murphy's lumpy little face was very pale this morning. She felt no new shock to see the four of them, for the basic shock that had rocked her whole system was still operating. Now she seemed to look all the way through them with cold green eyes.

Then Miss Murphy saw—saw the torn papers, the broken drawers, the ink on the wall.

" These four pupils, as you know, have done this sort of thing before. They were forgiven last year. This time Police Constable Davis here and I feel that something a bit different must be done about them. Now, I called you in, Miss Murphy, because they say—" in Mr. Madden's thin cultivated voice there was a small but distinct sneer—" that you can give them an alibi."

" I? " she said.

The eyes of the four were on her. For once she stood in the range of their eyes and was solid and seen.

" You know—" began Stan.

" Quiet," snapped Mr. Madden. A wave of something like alarm went through the phalanx. Mr. Madden was on the war-path. No one could doubt it.

"These four," he said, ostensibly to Miss Murphy but really to the policeman, "have got away with just about enough. We cannot help them here at school with the measures at our command. They need help, and they need it from experts. Some day they will know that they are very fortunate to be getting it right now." Mr. Madden glanced about him.

"This handkerchief," he said, "was found here in my office. And it gives them away. Now let's bypass this nonsense about an alibi and get on with it."

Miss Murphy looked at the handkerchief, a grimy scrap of cotton with I V. on the corner in black ink. For Ivy Voll. For Ivy. And the Roman way to write a four. She brooded on symbolism.

"Better let me put this to her," said Davis courteously, for Mr. Madden was obviously not quite objective this morning. "Now, Miss Murphy, it seems that last night, until nearly nine o'clock, there was somebody in the building."

"Adult education class, out at nine-two," snapped Mr. Madden. "Mr. Collins locked up after it. No trouble then. But when I came here, for something I found I needed at home, I walked right into the activities. They were at work, all right. In the dark. One of them hit me."

Miss Murphy now saw the slight bruise on his face.

"That," said Madden with satisfaction, "will make it enough of a crime really to—"

"Let's—er—get at this alibi business," said Davis, clearing his throat. "Now, Miss Murphy. Mr. Madden came here and caught them—although of course they got away in the dark—at about nine-twenty. Where were you at that time? Do you know?"

Miss Murphy did not speak. But she knew. She remembered.

"They say you were locked in a telephone kiosk," said Davis. "They say that they telephoned a man to come and let you out. They say they stayed by you."

"Is that what they say?" There was a sick chill in her voice. The four rippled slightly—like a sensitive plant recoiling from a touch.

"We have checked with the man," said Davis in his calm voice, "and he corroborates so much of their story. The girl called him shortly after nine. Now he let you out at nine twenty-five or a few moments later but he says these four were not there then."

Miss Murphy said nothing. The times marched through her mind. She recalled reading her watch in the poor light, her knees on the dirty floor.

"You see how it is, Miss Murphy?" Davis said. "They could have come here to the school after phoning."

"They did," said Madden positively.

"Somebody—" began Ivy.

"Be quiet," the Headmaster said. "Miss Murphy, I can only warn you. Don't make a mistake about this."

Miss Murphy stood there with power.

"You saw us," Stan said accusingly.

"Sure she did," said Ross.

The eyes of the girl, Ivy, bored into Miss Murphy's. Well? they said. There was even a little scorn in them. You are trapped, they said. You have to speak the truth and you know it.

Miss Murphy smiled and spoke the truth. "Yes, they were there. All four. They stood by me." She said this without bitterness, as if she spoke in a not unpleasant dream. "So," she continued, "they couldn't have done this damage. Not between nine and nine twenty-five. Is that what you wanted of me?"

"Gee, thanks," she heard one say. Was it Tentor?

"If she gives them the alibi—". Davis said, and opened his hands.

"Miss Murphy," said the Headmaster, in a tired voice, "if this is mercy, if you mistakenly think that they ought to be let off again—"

"No, sir," she said placidly.

"Get back to your classes," he snapped at them.

The four, with a certain scurry of feet, went away.

"If you are trying to be friendly and lying for them—I know you have had a certain sneaking fondness—" Mr. Madden's mouth looked as if it might froth and Davis had his ears pricked —"then you are so wrong," said Madden fiercely. "This was our last chance to save them. Don't you know that? They'll lie low, now, till the end of the year."

"I know it was the last chance," Miss Murphy said coolly. "But the truth is the truth. And it doesn't much matter. They are trash."

Both men looked at her a little shocked and startled, and then they let her go.

A little later she sat at her own desk and heard them knock and called, "Come in." They came in and arranged themselves before her. She knew at once what they had come to do. They were conforming. They'd throw a sop to civilization. They had grown shrewd. They would, in cold blood and on the surface, pretend to conform. So they would thank her. She felt quite cool and free.

"Miss Murphy," Stan said to her, "we wanted to tell you we think it was swell of you."

"To tell the truth?" said Miss Murphy lightly.

"Somebody just put my handkerchief there," said Ivy in her small whine. "On purpose. Because we'd be blamed anyway."

"Trying to frame us," Ross said.

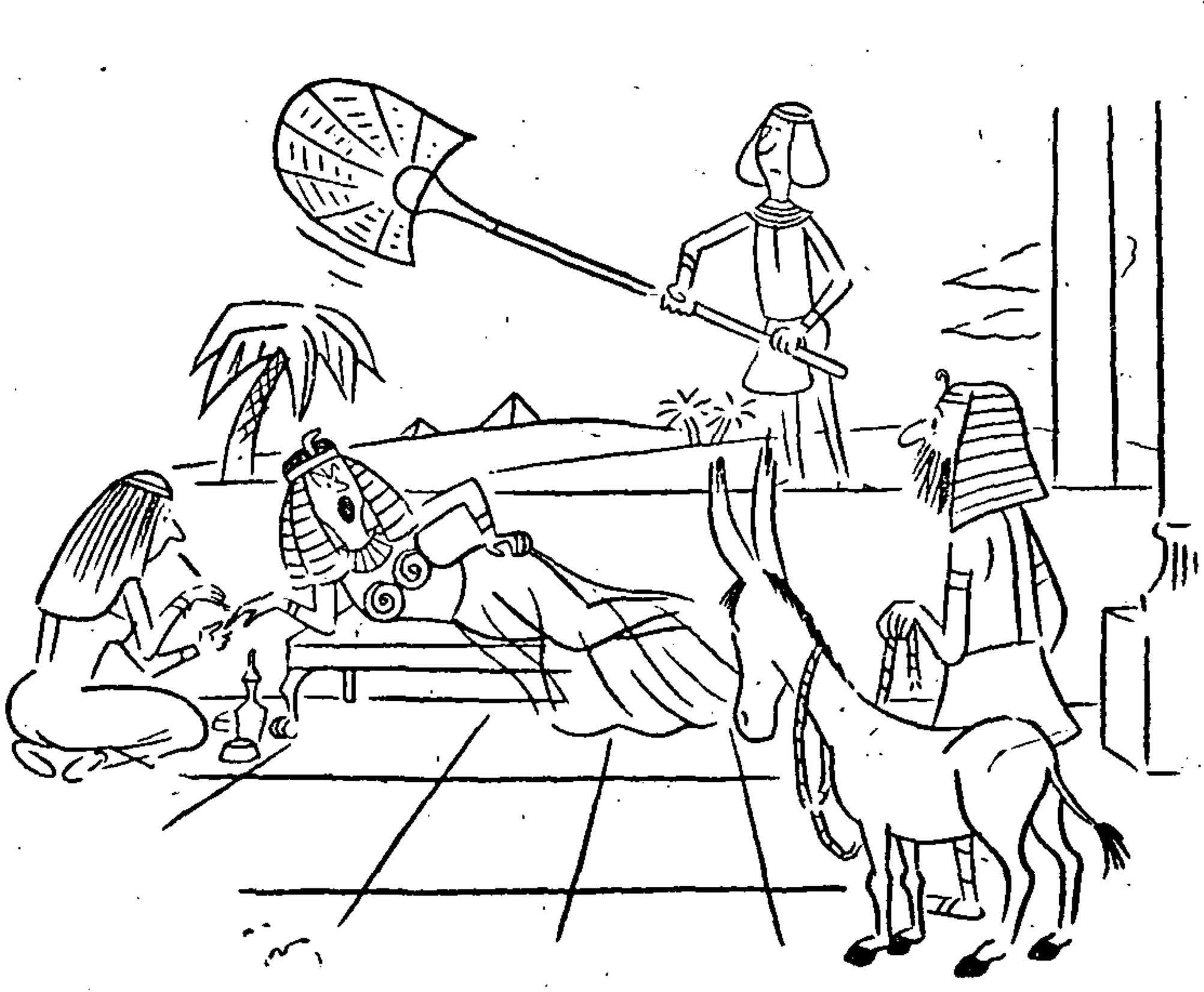
Tentor smiled, but his puffy eyes were sleepless in evil.

"Oh yes, you have been framed," Miss Murphy said. Her green eyes looked them over indifferently from under her dusty lashes. "You may go now," she said, and her mouth curved slightly. She might as well have said, Go on to hell.

The icy mystery of her cruelty—for she saw where they were going and did not care—intrigued them. They blinked at her, their eyes shifted, puzzled. But they left.

Outside they fell into formation. The girl, Ivy, put down her small feet proudly and drew on that sleep-walker's look, and Stan seemed fierce as ever, and the greyhounds ranged on the flanks, defying anyone to touch them or teach them, as they walked away.

Miss Murphy could see them in her mind's eye. She watched for the last time. She thought, What waste! Born, raised, grown so high, and lost already. Too late. Good-bye.



"I said, 'asp,' you fool!"

SPLENDID WORK

Howls of gaiety
wafted across the spaghetti

BY FELICIEN MARCEAU

"I AM going to be married," said Fiorella.

There was something rather odd about the way she said it. If you had heard her voice and seen the expression in her large and beautiful eyes you might have detected a hint of defiance. Defiance? Well, she had reason enough for it. I'll try to explain.

The year was 1956; the country, Italy; the place, Rome—or to be more exact the outskirts of the city where, in a partly built-up lane, fenced off from a stretch of waste ground, stood an unpretentious house in a scruffy garden. Here lived a jolly, unpretentious family—a numerous family: I almost forgot to mention this point which is not without its significance.

In this house, in fact, lived first: Bartolomeo Buttafava, a robust fifty-year-old, mason by trade, endowed by nature with the profile of a slightly debauched Bourbon; second: Madame Buttafava, wife of the above; third: their son Raffaele, a handsome, brown-skinned youth who sported a fine moustache; fourth and fifth: their daughter Livia, a plump brunette of emphatic speech married to Giovanni, a dumpy little man who revelled in his really surprising facial resemblance to Spencer Tracy; sixth, seventh, and eighth: another brown-haired daughter, Anna, this one the bony type, all teeth and taciturnity, her husband, an albino with a lisp, and small son, Pasquilino. Ninth and last, there was Fiorella, daughter, sister, sister-in-law, and aunt to all these people, aged twenty, lovely as the day—as a stormy day—and the possessor of a thoroughly mulish temper.

As I said, Bartolomeo Buttafava was a mason, by which I mean that, asked what he did, he said he was a mason. But that doesn't mean that he worked at building, for Bartolomeo Buttafava was dogged by a curious misfortune. From time to time he would find work—without looking far for it, it must be admitted, but in Rome a great deal of building is done. The odd thing was that he never managed to keep it. Three days was the longest he'd ever worked, and even this record dated back to the frenzied

years following the war. When it's a question of work, nearly everyone has his little foibles: the good Bartolomeo was no exception.

As soon as he arrived at the building site, he would sit down on a stone, assemble his mates all round him, and start to tell them stories. This weakness, as weaknesses go, was innocuous enough. Nevertheless there were employers, proper slave-drivers, whom it annoyed; they found that such anecdotes slowed down the work in progress. Then recriminations would follow . . .

Bartolomeo, without being unduly sensitive, disliked pointed remarks. Suddenly he would bristle with rage, talk about complaining to the Union—even do so sometimes—find himself sacked, and sent home. There he would salve his pride by playing cards with his son and his two sons-in-law.

Now the oddest thing of all was that Bartolomeo was not the only member of his family to experience this misfortune. His son, a sturdy, high-spirited lad, was a plumber. I mean that, asked what he did, he said he was a plumber. But he only plumbed when he had to, and that wasn't often. Plumbing, let it be clearly understood, is not roses all the way.

Raffaele, a healthy boy, was always hungry. The moment he was shut in the bathroom where his work awaited him, he would take from his knapsack the wherewithal for a snack. Tastes vary, and Raffaele's picnic generally consisted of strong cheese and garlic sausage. Believe it or not, there are people who maintain that in a bathroom the smell of garlic sausage is out of place. How could Raffaele work for such people?

As for the two sons-in-law, it was the same story. The dumpy one, Giovanni, was an insurance agent, and indeed would have worked hard at it if his handling of door-to-door inquiries had not been so awkward. According to his reckoning, he was welcomed at only one house out of every three—an average he considered too low. It was demoralizing for him. If you can believe him—and why shouldn't you?—it even made him suffer from unbearable headaches. Medical science has known stranger cases.

The albino would have liked to be a concierge. A praiseworthy ambition, and a career for which he would have been admirably suited but for one thing: he had no block of flats. You could say that he didn't look far for a block of flats, but honestly, a block of flats should be large enough for one to find without looking far. Lisping, the albino emphasized his difficulty. " Am I exthpected to thtand at a crothroadth and thay, ' I'm looking for a block of flatth?' "

In short, for all these reasons, in the Buttafava family not a

single man worked. The income was provided solely by the womenfolk. After all, why not? As good old Bartolomeo so neatly put it, "There are nine of us in the house—counting one baby. Out of nine, there are four workers. That is exactly the right proportion."

One of the elder sisters was a saleswoman in a big shop; the other worked in the packing department. Fiorella, more ambitious, was a typist in an advertising agency. As for Donna Rachele, the mother, she was a cook, but believe me, no ordinary cook. She was the one who put the finishing touches to big dinner-parties (as, for instance, to those given at the Foreign Office,) laying down her own terms, and coming home every evening. She looked and behaved just like a first-class cook, with high complexion shadowed by the faintest of moustaches, a tiny appetite, and a will of iron.

This last characteristic may explain the situation a little. Madame Buttafava would, of course, have preferred a husband who worked, but if he had, she would have been obliged to respect him. As Bartolomeo in fact did absolutely nothing, she was able to dominate him and, adapting herself to circumstance, she even gave up nagging him. From time to time, when he got on her nerves, she would throw him out of the house, but two or three days later she would welcome him back with pleasure.

Old Bartolomeo, the soul of good nature, was never offended. "It's all this work," he would explain to his sons-in-law, taking up the hand of cards where he'd left off. "Rachele works too much. Work sharpens the temper."

As he didn't work, he was always even-tempered; always ready to help anyone or to tell a story. The neighbours adored him—far more than his wife, whom they considered altogether too hoity-toity.

Madame Buttafava's dictatorial character also explained the tribal spirit of her family. She considered that as she had taken the trouble to bring up her children, there was no reason for them to leave home on the futile pretext of getting married. Hence the two penthouses, cleverly constructed by Bartolomeo and Raffaele (for to work once in a while is not to make a habit of it) in which the two young couples had their bedrooms. This clan life had its advantages. On the whole, in spite of a few arguments, the Buttafava family was happy.

The wives, it is true, came home from work tired and strained, but the men, rosy-cheeked, well rested by an afternoon's siesta, would appear calm and fresh, and with their jokes would soon put the women in a good mood. In the intervals between card games, they would have done the shopping, cooked the meals, and tidied

the house. These light domestic tasks not having exhausted them, they would not, like so many husbands, shy away from the thought of going to the cinema. No, they were always ready to go to the cinema, and the first to suggest it. And, of course, shamelessly spoilt by his grandfather and three uncles, the baby throve . . . That's how it was: with the women working and the men letting life flow sweetly past, the Buttafava household was happy as could be.

All, that is, except Fiorella. Here is an example of the eternal perversity of human nature. Not being married to any of the four card-players, Fiorella should have been the last to worry. But not at all—she couldn't stand men who didn't work. One evening at table she raised a tragic face from her plate. "You should be ashamed!" she said.

"Well, of course," said Livia, always ready to oblige. "Look at them. Of course they're ashamed . . ."

"Ashamed?" The brothers-in-law shook with merriment.

"I am *revolted* by men who don't work," continued Fiorella.

"Don't be silly," said her brother, also laughing, "women who work don't disgust me."

Howls of gaiety wafted over the spaghetti. Fiorella was furious.

"Just wait till I tell them that at the office!"

"You'd do better to work, instead of nattering."

"If I were you—"

"Well, you're not," intervened Donna Rachele, with the authority of an expert cook. "Now eat up and be quiet."

Fiorella wasn't beaten yet. "At any rate, I know one thing—"

"That's better than nothing."

"—I shall only marry a man who works."

"Splendid!" said the brothers-in-law, with heavy irony. Then, without rancour, they asked, "Are you coming to the cinema with us?"

Fiorella wrinkled her little nose, but as she loved the cinema she went—though she could not suppress a sigh of envy when a man appeared upon the screen, a real, proper man, a husband who worked.

Her glory, happiness, and pride therefore knew no bounds when one evening she was able to announce, "I am going to be married."

The news, understandably, caused no small stir. Even the baby sighed, but that was no doubt just a coincidence.

"You're getting married?"

"Yes."

"To whom?" asked Donna Rachele, who liked to go to the heart of a question.

"To a man—"

"Well, I never!" said the albino facetiously.

Fiorella quelled him with a look. "To a man who works," she continued, "an advertising agent. A clever boy. He earns eighty thousand lire a month from our office alone."

The figure was slightly exaggerated, but not knowing this, the albino caught his breath sharply. Bartolomeo blinked. "Eighty thousand," he said.

The sum seemed to float across the room.

"Sometimes even more," said Fiorella, emboldened. "And he's called Gianpaolo."

Madame Buttafava bowed her head, chewing reflectively as if this name had a special taste. Then, weightily, "You'd better bring him here," she said.

The next Sunday, the said Gianpaolo made an excellent impression on the Buttafava family. He was tall, slightly stooping, and with a tendency to hurry over his words. He wore an electric-blue suit. At five o'clock, Madame Buttafava emerged from a majestic silence.

"Yes," she said.

She rose. The whole family watched her, and Fiorella put her hand over Gianpaolo's. He stopped, amazed, in mid sentence. From the sideboard, Madame Buttafava took a stick. Comprehension dawned on the watching faces. Madame Buttafava opened the door, and went down into the garden. Everyone followed. It was still light, and there was a faint glimmer of sun. Madame Buttafava bent forward; her knees cracked in the silence. She began to draw a line on the ground. A hubbub of relief broke from the family ranks. Madame Buttafava had consented to the marriage. She was drawing the plan of the bedroom that would have to be built for the young couple.

Next day, happily laughing, whistling like blackbirds, and slapping each other on the back, the four men set to work. Bartolomeo took charge of the masonry. Raffaele measured the pipes. The brother-in-law, Spencer Tracy, transported the bricks in his wheelbarrow, while the albino gave advice, six nails in his mouth doing nothing to improve his already defective articulation.

They worked at their leisure, without haste, Bartolomeo stopping from time to time to tell some story, and Raffaele dashing off every two hours to butter himself a sandwich. Out in the open, garlic sausage loses most of its unpleasantness. On Sunday, Gianpaolo came to give a hand.

Two months later, the bedroom was ready, tastefully decorated in lilac wallpaper with darker stripes of the same tone. The marriage took place and, in spite of herself, even Donna Rāchele shed a tear. Any mother will understand her.

The first days of married life were idyllically happy. I would have said that they lived under a real Italian sky but, as this story takes place in Italy; perhaps that is rather too obvious a way of putting it. To celebrate their wedding, Fiorella and her husband took a week's holiday. They rose late, idling away the morning in their room. In the afternoon, they visited the big shops. With their two incomes, they were the richest of the family. Fiorella bought a new dress and a coat and skirt; Gianpaolo couldn't resist buying some ties. In the evening, they would show the others their purchases, then go to the cinema—not the local cinema, which was cosy and shabby; no, they went to the big ones in the centre of the city. Sisters and brothers-in-law made suitably impressed comments. Those who are slightly mean, as we all know, derive three-quarters of their happiness from the envy of others. This must have been the mean streak coming out in Fiorella: she was happy.

Then came the day when they had to return, Fiorella to the office, Gianpaolo to his clients. That morning, as befitted the wife of a working man, Fiorella got up first to make coffee. In the kitchen, she found her father and Spencer Tracy busy getting breakfast, while the albino warmed up a bottle for the baby; jobs which they did willingly, seeing that they had the entire day in which to recover from this early-morning effort.

Fiorella felt rather resentful. "You might at least have made mine, too," she said. "Like you used to."

Bartolomeo wagged a solemn forefinger at her. "You have a husband now," he said.

Back in her bedroom, where Gianpaolo was still asleep, Fiorella couldn't help dropping a few hints. Gianpaolo, like a true working man, was utterly impervious to hints. He didn't even answer. It was the same in the evening. When the other sisters came home as usual to find their rooms tidy, the table laid, and the food simmering, at seven o'clock Fiorella still had to make the bed, sweep up, run to the butcher, and scour the saucepans. When, at nine o'clock, the rest of the family burst gaily in, urging them to come to the cinema, the cross Fiorella was still in the first stages of cooking dinner.

"Do give me a hand," she said to her husband, who was reading the newspaper.

"I've been slaving away all day," said Gianpaolo, offended.

"We'll never be able to go to the cinema."

"Who's talking about going to the cinema? After the distance I've covered today all I want is to go to bed." That put the lid on it: he was in a bad-temper. "I'm not like your brothers-in-law," he snarled. "I earn my living. And I'm tired in the evening."

Bartolomeo's axiom was again proved right: work certainly sharpens the temper. The very next day, Gianpaolo came home in a rage. A customer had broken his word. Fiorella, too, was touchy, because of a row at the office. Meeting in this state, they quarrelled, and the albino had to intervene before they would make it up. Three days later Gianpaolo complained about his cutlet, and Fiorella retorted bitterly that when you had to shop at seven o'clock in the evening, only odds and ends were left. Soon she counted herself lucky if she got him to the cinema once a week: this was far too little for Fiorella. She started to think the whole thing out. What on earth was the use of earning enough money to go to the very best cinemas if she wasn't even able to go to the shabbiest? What was the use of having a better job than her sisters if it meant that she had to work twice as hard as they did, her husband always as ill-tempered as theirs were carefree?

Quite suddenly Fiorella realized this shining truth: if time without money is a hardship, money without time is even worse. At the end of a month, she had had enough of it. One morning, heart beating wildly, she went into the director's office, opened her mouth, shut it again, but finally announced that she was now married, that a wife's place was in the home, that she intended henceforth to devote herself entirely to housework, and that, in consequence, she was giving notice. The director made a note of it, and as he had nothing but praise for her work, presented her with a small objet d'art.

All well and good! In spite of a few well-meaning jokes from the family, this seemed a thoroughly sensible solution to the problem. After a few good rests in the afternoon, Fiorella felt much better-tempered, and Gianpaolo came home at night to find a clean, welcoming room, a lovingly-prepared meal, and a wife as fresh and lovely as a rose. Yes, things were really going well for the young couple.

Unfortunately, one couldn't say the same about the rest of the household. Men have a well-known peculiarity: they cannot do without women entirely, yet in an exclusively male party, they feel a special kind of happy-go-lucky contentment that the presence of a woman instantly dispels. The four men in the Buttafava family conformed to this rule. Up till then, with the house all

theirs, they had been absolutely at ease, daydreaming, lolling in bed rolling cigarettes, wearing pyjamas until noon. Fiorella wouldn't stand for it. They resigned themselves to getting dressed in the morning, but were nonetheless resentful. Reasoning, and rightly, that housework takes far less time if it is done in a hurry, they generally left the beds and the washing-up until nearly five o'clock. Fiorella would have none of it. How could they play cards amid such disorder? They ought to tidy first and then play.

This was obviously a reasonable suggestion: it didn't, however, find favour with the men. Spencer Tracy muttered something surly; Fiorella snapped back. The atmosphere became tense and, several evenings running, the wives were surprised to find their husbands strained and irritable. Gianpaolo himself, when the first fine rapture had worn off, seemed none too pleased.

"It's incredible!" he exclaimed. "I'm the only man who works in this house. Your brothers-in-law lead a pretty easy life." It was almost as if he envied them.

During the next fortnight, the situation grew steadily worse. As Fiorella was adamant about the relative order of importance of housework and card-games, the men started to go out to play cards in a nearby café. And in a café they had to drink. Otherwise what would it have looked like? The balanced budget of the family was seriously threatened. Some of the café's other regular customers held different political views from Bartolomeo. Discussions arose from which he would return with a bitter expression, his face ravaged and twitching. One day, the albino was made the butt of a joke concerning his faulty pronunciation. The joker was bald: the albino retorted wittily that he'd rather speak through a mouthful of hair than go out without a hair on his head. This the bald man resented. The albino emerged from the brawl that ensued with a bloody eye, which gave trouble for some days.

When his wife reproached him he replied, for the first time in his life, with a volley of oaths.

The evening this episode took place, Madame Buttafava at last lost patience. With an impassioned gesture she silenced the albino, then rose and entered Fiorella's room. Behind her back, good old Bartolomeo winked at his daughters and sons-in-law.

In the silence behind the closed door they heard Gianpaolo's angry voice. "And what about my work?" Then, "Very well, we shall leave."

In the kitchen, Bartolomeo shook his big head reassuringly. Gianpaolo wouldn't leave. Madame Buttafava would see to that. Her voice was heard again.

"You can if you like. But of course you won't find anywhere else to stay for less than twenty thousand lire . . ."

Nowadays, if you pass by the Buttafavas' house, everything is calm and orderly. In the spring the men sit on the front-door steps to play cards. Fiorella has taken up work again. Every morning her husband wakes first and gets her breakfast. Then, being of a courteous disposition, he escorts her to the bus-stop. The bus arrives; Fiorella gets in.

Back at the house they await him for the first hand of cards, yet sometimes he busies himself with odd jobs about the house. Habit is too strong for him—he is not yet used to complete idleness. Around five o'clock, it is he who gives the signal to start the housework.

Soon, moreover, there will be a baby's bottles for him to warm.

Translated by P. Barstow

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★ ★ ★

CYGNET RING

Whether you regard them as something ornamental to be gazed at across the lake, or something fierce to be avoided at close quarters in a punt, try out your knowledge of swans on the questions below, and if the going's not all swansdown, paddle along to page 90

1. *Can you give the correct term for a male, female, and junior swan? (No glancing up top.)*
2. *Do they* really *sing before they die?*
3. *Name the author of:* *a. Swan Lake*
   b. Swansong
   c. Swan of Denmark
   d. Swan of Tuonela.
4. *Whose most famous role was The Dying Swan?*
5. *Who was:* *a. The Swan of Avon (easy)*
   b. of Mantua (two marks)
   c. of Lichfield (this is a difficult one.)
6. *In which Wagnerian opera does a swan play a prominent part?*
7. *Who was the girl with whom Jove, in swan-form, wandered from the matrimonial path?*
8. *Who are swan-uppers? What is their uniform?*

Green Air

On the fields of summer the sun and the shadows bestow
Vestments of purple and gold. HENRY REED

Come from your precious garden
Of flowers and onyxes
To dazzle the dark verandah
With the emeralds of your eyes.

And in your delicate hands
Bring the flaming orb of the sun
To bloom on the rickety table
Like a wound of wallflowers.

In the cool, moth-shadowed room
Hid from the window's eye
Conjure up with soft laughter
Visions of magic hours

And let the perfumed woods
Lean down with birds and blessings
To drown us lost and loving
Like children under leaves.

JOHN SMITH, *The Birth of Venus*

Surrender

The tree was tall and straggling. It had thrown its briers over a hawthorn-bush, and its long streamers trailed thick right down to the grass, splashing the darkness everywhere with great split stars, pure white. In bosses of ivory and in large splashed stars

the roses gleamed on the darkness of foliage and stems and grass. Paul and Miriam stood close together, silent, and watched. Point after point the steady roses shone out to them, seeming to kindle something in their souls. The dusk came like smoke around, and still did not put out the roses.

Paul looked into Miriam's eyes. She was pale and expectant with wonder, her lips were parted, and her dark eyes lay open to him. His look seemed to travel down into her. Her soul quivered . . .

"They seem as if they walk like butterflies, and shake themselves," he said.

She looked at her roses. They were white, some incurved and holy, others expanded in an ecstasy. The tree was dark as a shadow.

She lifted her hand impulsively to the flowers; she went forward and touched them in worship.

D. H. LAWRENCE
Sons and Lovers

Summer Music

Summer is all a green air—
From the brilliant lawn, sopranos
Through murmuring hedges
Accompanied by high poplars;
In fields of wheat, surprises;
Through faraway pastures, flows
In slow decrescendos.

Summer is all a green sound—
Rippling in the foreground
To that soft applause,
The foam of Queen Anne's lace.
Green, green in the ear
Is all we care to hear.

Until a field suddenly flashes
The winging with so sharp
A yellow that it smashes
Loud cymbals in the ear.

Minor has turned to major
As summer, lulling and so mild,
Goes golden-buttercup-wild.

MAY SARTON

Bitten, But Not Shy

She parted the bushes farther. Freckles saw that her little blue cotton frock clung to her, limp with perspiration. It was torn across the breast. One sleeve hung open from shoulder to elbow. A thorn had torn her arm until it was covered with blood, and the gnats and mosquitoes were clustering around it. Her feet were in lace hose and low shoes.

Freckles . . . bathed away the blood and bandaged the ugly, ragged wound. He worked with trembling fingers and a face tense with earnestnèss.

"Is it feeling any better?" he asked.

"Oh, it's well now!" cried the Angel . . . "It won't make a scar. Why, it just couldn't, when you have dressed it so nicely."

The velvety touch of her warm arm was tingling in Freckles' fingertips.

GENE STRATTON PORTER, *Freckles*

Listen to Summer

Sounds sum and summon the remembering of summers:
The humming of the sun
The mumbling in the honeysuckle vine
The whirring in the clovered grass
The pizzicato plinkle of ice in an auburn
uncle's amber glass . . .
The munching of saltwater at the splintered dock
The slop and slap of waves on little sloops
The quarrelling of oarlocks hours across the bay
The canvas sails that bleat as they
are blown. The heaving buoy bell-
ing HERE I am
HERE you are HEAR HEAR
listen listen listen
The gramophone is wound
the music goes round and round
"Bye Bye Blues Lindy's coming"
voices calling calling calling
"Children! Children! Time's Up
Time's Up"
Merrily sturdily wantonly the familial voices
cheeringly chidingly call to the children Time's Up
and the mute children's unvoiced clamour sacks the summer air
crying Mother Mother are you there?

ISABELLA GARDNER, *Summer Remembered*

★ *Argosy's reprint by readers' special request, is a delightful story by favourite author, Paul Gallico.*

CHICKEN SURPRISE

BY PAUL GALLICO

NEXT time you are touring the château country of France and visit the string of airy castles cresting the hilltops along the placid Loire from Blois to Tours, you surely will drop down from the towered and mullioned keep of the Château Loiret, just below Chaumont, to eat a meal and drink the wine at the famous Auberge Château Loiret at the foot of the castle.

There you will unquestionably partake of that superb and unrivalled speciality of the house, *Poularde Surprise Treize Minets* and find your palate enthralled by the indefinable flavour imparted to the fowl by the mysterious ingredient which is the particular secret of Monsieur Armand Bonneval, host and chef of the Auberge. And like so many, many others before you, you will attempt without success to identify the famous component X which to this day has defied the most educated taste-buds of all France.

You also will encounter Monsieur Bonneval, stocky, red-faced, with short-cut, upstanding, pepper-and-salt hair, youthful-looking because of the energy and kindliness in his face, and Madame Bonneval, a woman of large heart and girth who, as always in France, will be seated behind the desk in charge of the till and the accounts.

And, either perched on the desk next to Madame Bonneval or twining at the feet of her husband as he appears at the dining-room door to check on the effect of his cooking, you will probably observe a small black-and-white cat—not a particularly beautiful specimen, owing to the fact that she is somewhat cross-eyed, but nevertheless the beloved pet and pride and joy of Monsieur and Madame, your hosts.

As a matter of fact, the famous and succulent recipe is in a way associated with her, Minette being her name. But " Minet " in France is also the generic nickname for cats, just as we call them " puss," and thus a literal translation of the by-now-world-renowned dish of *Poularde Surprise Treize Minets* might be " Chicken-Surprise-in-the-style-of-Thirteen-Cats."

However, when it comes to inquiring of M. Bonneval how this

epicure's delight was named or what it is that makes his *poularde* more tasty, stimulating, and unforgettable than any other in the world, and what unknown ingredient is the key to this miraculous gastronomic blend, you will, I know, run up against a stone wall.

Guarded blueprints for aeroplanes, battleships, and submarines are traded on an international bourse, diplomatic confidences are whispered over cocktails, the secrets of the atom bomb have been freely bandied about; but up to this moment, not one single person in the whole world beyond Monsieur and Madame Bonneval has been privy to the secret of the recipe for this famous delicacy. Permit me, then.

In the days prior to the events I am about to narrate, Armand Bonneval, a former assistant chef of the Café de Paris, honourably retired, Cordon Bleu member of the Club de Cent, and now sole owner and proprietor of the Auberge Château Loiret, was consumed with a burning ambition.

In the 1954 Guide Michelin, that tourist's and gourmet's bible, which is the motorist's survey of France, the Auberge was designated by three crossed spoons and forks, denoting a "very comfortable restaurant." This was not at all bad, particularly for a restaurant in a village as small as Loiret, where the usual indication was one crossed spoon and fork or none at all.

But it did not satisfy the artistic and creative soul of Monsieur Bonneval. In his day he had been a great cook. In his old age he longed for the tangible recognition of his genius. A higher rating would likewise make a considerable financial difference to himself and Madame, his partner through forty years of unremitting toil.

The size and location of his Auberge precluded his receiving the four or five crossed utensils more often awarded to the big de luxe restaurants of Paris, Lyons, Vichy, and Cannes. However, the famous Guide Michelin annual has further signs to distinguish the superior cuisines it has tested and listed in villages and towns throughout France—namely, one, two, or three stars added to the spoons and forks.

Three stars, denoting one of the best tables in the nation, and worthy of a special journey of many miles, were as beyond the reach and hopes of Monsieur Bonneval as the stars that spangled the firmament above the Loire Valley at night. There were but twelve of these awarded in all France.

Nor was there any better chance of achieving two stars, indicating an "excellent cuisine: worth a detour," of which there were but fifty-three examples in all the thousands of restaurants, auberges, hotels, and bistros throughout the land.

But Monsieur Bonneval did yearn most mightily, with his honest heart and Frenchman's pride, to be awarded the addition of the single star which would announce to traveller and native alike that he set *une bonne table dans la localité*, and that the visitor to his board would be rewarded with something special.

If his winning of the three crossed spoons and forks had already made him an important man in the district, the star would elevate him to the status of distinguished citizen. If now they just managed to make both ends meet, the added star would enable them to amass a competency towards their final days. Alas, there was nothing specific that Monsieur Bonneval could do to achieve this ambition, for the matter was not in his hands.

As he would explain sadly to Madame Bonneval, when sitting in their flat above the Auberge after hours, with his beloved Minette purring in his lap, there were literally hundreds of thousands of eating-places throughout France that had to be covered; the inspectors, or official tasters, of the Guide Michelin were only so many; they had but one stomach apiece which would hold only so many cubic centimetres. On a mathematical basis, it might be years before one again appeared to sample the fare at the Auberge Loiret, and perhaps never again in their lifetime.

But even if by some chance one should appear, there was no opportunity for Monsieur Bonneval to prepare the kind of speciality that would be likely to bowl over the taster, for the simple reason that the Guide Michelin conducted its tests and listings with scrupulous integrity and fairness. One never knew when the inspector was in one's midst. He came and went in the guise of an ordinary tourist. The Grand Lottery in Paris was not handled with more honesty and care.

"Ah, if one could but know in advance some time," Monsieur Bonneval would groan, filled with ambition and desire. "Who knows but with the star I should be able to take you to Italy on that little trip we planned so long ago."

And Madame Bonneval would comfort him, "Never mind, Armand. I am sure you will receive your star somehow, because you deserve it. And besides, it would not be fair if you did know in advance."

One summer afternoon a letter arrived for Monsieur Bonneval that caused him to stare as though he could not believe his eyes, and then call loudly for Madame to come and read it to him again, to make sure he had not been deceived. Madame did so, with her circle of additional chins quivering a little. It was short and to the point.

My dear Bonneval: I doubt whether you would remember me, but many years ago you had the occasion to do me a good turn when I was hungry and on my uppers, and I have never forgotten your kindness.

It so happens that I now find myself in a position to return the favour. Through my connections with the Guide Michelin, upon which I shall not elaborate, I am advised that next Friday, the thirteenth, an inspector will be passing through Loiret-sur-Loire, and has been instructed to dine at the Auberge to check on the quality of your meals. I know that your genius will find the best way to make use of this information. Wishing you the very best of luck, I am an old friend who must sign himself

XYZ.

There it was—the bolt out of the clearest of skies. Not only was the longed-for visit to take place, but Monsieur Bonneval was actually to have notice in advance and time to prepare one of his more superb specialities, such as duck stuffed with chopped truffles, liver paste, and *champignons*, with orange sauce, or his own version of *coq au vin*.

" I shall be famous! We shall grow rich! " declared Monsieur Bonneval, feasting his eyes again on the page of the wonderful letter. But then he cried in alarm, " Great heavens! The letter is dated the eighth, but it has been delayed in transit. Friday the thirteenth, when the inspector is to come, is this very day."

It was true. The calendar on the wall displayed a large red " 13." Suddenly the affair assumed an urgency that was not dispelled by the exclamation of Madame Bonneval, who had glanced out of the window, " And that must be he, arriving this very minute! "

A large and glittery car had poked its expensive snout alongside the Auberge and discharged one who could only have spent the major portion of his existence in sampling the finest foods and wines, for he was as fat as a prize pig stuffed for exhibition. He carried the Guide Michelin in his hand, and entered the front door with a combined expression of truculence and expectancy.

At once he became identified in Bonneval's mind as " Monsieur Michelin Taster," friend, enemy, instrument upon which he would play his gastronomic symphony, critic, and bearer of the laurel wreath, or rather, star, that would eventually be bestowed upon him.

However, one thing was patent. There was not a moment to lose. Already flustered by the unexpected imminence of his trial, Monsieur Bonneval rushed off to the kitchen, crying to Madame as he made his exit, " I shall prepare him *Homard dans la Lune*! " Which was not at all what he had meant either to say or to cook.

"Lobster in the Moon" was the last thing in the world he would have dreamt of making for such an important test, knowing full well that with lobster it can be this way or that way, whereas your ducks, chickens, and gigots are always safe.

For the recipe is a tricky one, calling for one large lobster, *bien vivant*—in other words, a brisk and lively fellow—to be extracted, cut up, seasoned with salt and pepper, and sauté in oil and butter after which the oil is withdrawn and a tablespoon of finely chopped shallots or chives and a whisper of garlic are added. To give this mixture a little authority, a glass of cognac and another of white wine are now introduced, after which three tomatoes are broken into small bits with a half-tablespoonful of chopped parsley and a shot of cayenne pepper, and the whole thing is cooked for twenty minutes in a casserole at a steady heat. The lobster is then removed and stuffed into the "Moon," a hollowed-out, crisp brioche. Now comes the delicate moment. The sauce is thickened with a little cream laced with a shot of brandy and the whole thing poured over the hot, crispy, lobster-filled pastry.

A man wants to be in complete command of himself to bring off a dish like that, particularly when it meant as much as it did to Monsieur Bonneval. That he was not was evidenced when he almost bumped into Minette, the black-and-white cat, as he charged into the kitchen, bellowing loudly for Céleste, the kitchen maid, and Brazon, the man-of-all-work, her lover.

This served only to unnerve him further, for it so happened, not long before, that Minette had been as fortunate as to encounter a gentleman friend in the park of the château who had been able to overlook the unhappy tendency of her eyes to cross, and she was now imminently about to be blessed with the fruits of this genuine affection, and a fair packet of them, too, if one could judge from her size.

Nor was it exactly a happy moment in the life of Céleste, who a few weeks ago had been seized with the idea of marrying Brazon, and of course had demanded an increase in pay to support this bizarre notion—a request which Monsieur Bonneval, backed by Madame, had quite sensibly refused, since one did not say yes to such ideas the first time. As a result, Céleste was red-eyed and snuffly a good deal of the time, and not quite herself.

This was a pity, for she was to Monsieur Bonneval what the deft theatre nurse is to the great surgeon. With paring-knife and chopping-board, a veteran of a hundred routines, she had stood at his side, ready to supply in an instant what the master needed in the line of utensils, saucepans, casseroles, chopped onions, shaved carrots, bouquets of herbs, and so on.

So there was already a considerable disaster building up in

Monsieur Bonneval's kitchen, let alone its being Friday the thirteenth.

The lobster, when produced from the cold room, not only did not answer to the description of a brisk and lively fellow but, on the contrary, was practically in a state of rigor mortis. Cutting him up, hence, was no longer a culinary gesture, but an autopsy. It was Fate giving Monsieur Bonneval one more chance to evade what it had in store for him. Had be been in his right senses he would have dumped the crustacean corpse into the dustbin and started on something else.

But his mind was imprisoned by that inflexibility and rigidity that, in the face of a crisis, sometimes affects the best of cooks and housekeepers. Monsieur Bonneval was bent on making Lobster in the Moon, and so he rushed onward headlong to his doom.

Almost at once there commenced such a catalogue of kitchen catastrophes as can be appreciated only by the housewife or chef who has battled with the extraordinary breed of gremlins that sometimes arrive to interfere, obstruct, and frustrate, when there is a truly important dinner to be got to the table.

While Céleste reversed her instruction and scraped a soupçon of shallot into a tablespoon of chopped garlic, instead of vice versa, Brazon announced that there appeared to have been a change in the wind, affecting the draught of the huge iron stove, plus a blockage of some sort, and he could seem to put no heat in it, and Odette, the waitress, affected by the mounting tension, upset the soup into the lap of the fat man identified in the mind of Bonneval as Monsieur Michelin Taster. This fetched a bellow of rage from the dining-room, matched only by the sound emerging from the kitchen when Monsieur Bonneval discovered that Céleste, ruminating on the inhumanity of man, had taken his frying-pan, which for eighteen years had known no other cleansing than with salt and a piece of bread, and washed it with kitchen soap and water.

Disaster followed upon disaster. The stove, stuffed with newspapers, straw, kindling, and coke, emitted clouds of acrid smoke, one whiff of which was sufficient to affect the delicate flavours planned by Monsieur Bonneval. The cream pitcher upset in the refrigerator, inundating everything therein, and at the critical moment it transpired that Brazon had misplaced the key to the wine cellar.

Monsieur Bonneval moved as one in the grip of a hideous nightmare. Matters went from bad to worse as a tin of fat caught fire, the handle of his best frying-pan broke, and the lamp upset. Céleste and Brazon went completely off their heads, the latter breaking the egg-beater and short-circuiting the

refrigerator, while the former reached a new peak in destructive confusion by putting salt in the egg-whites in place of sugar, and cutting up, on the board reserved for crushing garlic, the almonds destined for the famous *soufflé au curaçao.*

Through all this, red-faced, sweating, the glare as of a wild animal filling his heretofore gentle eyes, struggling to retain his temper and his sanity in the face of trials that would have dis-jointed a saint, Monsieur Bonneval stolidly attempted to fight his way through the morass of calamities that was engulfing him.

It was a losing battle. Friday the thirteenth had not finished with him yet. For just as he was stirring the delicate *sauce vanille* intended to go with the *soufflé* which was browning in the oven; Madame Bonneval, unnerved by the sounds of panic from backstage, abandoned her post next to the till and invaded the kitchen. Her faith in her husband's culinary powers shaken for the first time, she committed the unpardonable crime of opening the oven door to see how the confection was coming along, just as Brazon unlatched the back entrance, permitting a swirl of cool air to tear through the kitchen and smite the *soufflé* where it would hurt the most.

Purple with outrage, Monsieur Bonneval made a lunge to swing shut the oven door. It was at this precise moment that poor Minette chose to make one of her sagging promenades across the kitchen floor just in time to trip and unbalance Monsieur Bonneval and send the *sauce vanille* splashing on to the top of the range, where it made a most dreadful smell.

Something snapped inside Monsieur Bonneval. Flesh and blood could endure no more. Tortured beyond human endurance, he hauled back his right foot and applied it to the rear end of Minette, who happened to be aimed towards the back door at the moment.

With a terrible scream of outraged indignation, the loaded Minette took off like a blimp released from its moorings, and soaring majestically up into the night, vanished from sight.

Now Monsieur Bonneval turned upon the humans. "*Vache!*" he shouted at his wife. "*Animal!*" he bawled at Céleste. "*Crétin!*" he nominated Odette, the waitress. "*Cochon!*" he dubbed Brazon.

The reactions were immediate. Brazon resigned; Odette vanished; Céleste threw her apron over her head and had hysterics; while Madame Bonneval swept from the kitchen, went upstairs, and locked herself in her room.

Bonneval himself carried in the *soufflé* and placed it before Monsieur Michelin Taster, where it gave a soft sigh and collapsed flatter than an old-fashioned opera-hat.

The fat man took one nibble at the edge of the thing and then let out a roar that shook the dining-room.

"Criminal! Assassin! Poisoner!" he shouted. "You call yourself a chef! The lobster tastes of soap, the coffee of paraffin, and your *soufflé* is flavoured with garlic! Three spoons and forks they have given you, eh?" and at this point he waved the red-covered volume of the Guide Michelin under Monsieur Bonneval's appalled nose. "Well, when I am finished with you, you will no longer be able to swindle innocent travellers! Faker!"

And with this, he tore the napkin from his collar and stalked from the room.

When a few moments later, the car thundered away from the Auberge, it carried with it, in addition to the indignant fat man, the hopes, ambitions, and large pieces of the broken heart of Monsieur Bonneval.

Monsieur Bonneval was of the breed that wastes no time crying over spilt cream, but faces up manfully to the blows of life, and recovers quickly therefrom. But he needed the aid and companionship of his wife. Pocketing his badly-damaged pride, he hurried to the door of Madame's locked room, from which emerged sounds of grief, and spoke through the keyhole.

"Come now, my dear, it is all over. Nothing more can happen. I am punished for my sins. The inspector has departed to make his report, and we shall be poor again. But as long as I have you, I shall not lack the courage to make a fresh start—somewhere in a place where we are not known, perhaps. Come, old friend, we have been through much together. Do not take a little incident so to heart."

From within, Madame Bonneval cried, "Little incident! You called me a cow!"

Obviously, a special effort was required. Monsieur Bonneval now addressed the door as follows: "Dear wife, I was wrong to let petty trifles exasperate me into forgetting myself. But look. Even in my anger against Fate, how careful I was in my choice of animals! For is not the cow the sweetest, the gentlest, the kindest, and the most beautiful in all the kingdom? Does she not, with lavish generosity and warm heart, play mother with her milk to all mankind? Is not her glance melting, her disposition notable, and her character beyond reproach? Does not her soft and expressive face invite caresses?"

He ceased when he heard the key turning slowly in the lock. Thereafter he went downstairs, soothed the waitress, apologized to Brazon, and cured Céleste's hysterics with a promise of a raise in salary should the Auberge not be forced to close.

Notwithstanding the peace declared within his domain, the heart of Monsieur Bonneval was as heavy as a stone, for Minette had not returned. His conscience was as black as the night because of the kick he had bestowed upon her, and particularly in the light of her delicate state of health. He would rather have cut off his right arm than perpetrate an indignity, much less an injury, upon his little friend. He had called and called, but there had been no sign of her.

She had every right to be angry with him—if she was still alive. How, then, to persuade her of his love for her, and his terrible contrition?

The hour was past eleven. He had been calling her since ten. Suddenly an idea smote him. Minette was mad about chicken. He would tempt her with her favourite food.

Purpose now gripped Monsieur Bonneval, and he said to himself, "Little Minette, I shall cook you a *Poularde Surprise Royale*, all for your very own. For you I shall cook this as I have never cooked before, for I am very ashamed of having lost my temper and kicked you from the rear."

He set to at once, and everything seemed to work like magic, as though Friday the thirteenth had expended its malignancy, and Fate was no longer interested in harassing Monsieur Bonneval. The stove functioned like a charm, Brazon was as sharp as a razor, and Céleste was her old, cool, efficient self, anticipating his every wish. Objects not only behaved themselves but positively co-operated, seeming to leap into his hand when he had need of them.

With a series of deft movements he boned the chicken and then stuffed it with goose-liver pâté, truffles, and a stew of giblets and kidneys made in meat stock and laced with a jigger of port.

Poor Minette, he thought as he added the ruby-red liquid, after what she has been through she will be in need of a little stimulant.

Working now with supreme concentration and passion, with the recipe burnt into his memory in the way a conductor knows every note of a great symphony without the score, he set about making a sauce for the bird, using the bones of the pullet, onions, carrots, leeks, celery, and a bouquet of herbs, which he fortified with a half bottle of Bollinger '43. "One gives champagne to expectant mothers," he said to himself as the golden wine frothed into the brown gravy.

Exquisite odours began to fill the kitchen. It was art for love's sake and, like all true artists and lovers, he became inspired and began to improvise as he went along, making a daring and radical experiment with here a herb, there a spice, a bit of smoked fat, a

glass of very old cognac. "For if she is a little drunk she will become mellow and forgive me the more readily," he reasoned.

And then it was, as he ransacked his cupboard of herbs and spices, looking to delight still further the heart and appetite of Minette, that he found and added an ingredient that never before had been a part of *Poularde Surprise Royale* or any other dish.

When the bird was cooked to a turn, he performed some final rites, garnishing it with truffles and *pâté de foie gras*, poured the magnificent sauce over it, partitioned it, and putting one half on a plate, went out into the night with this savoury harbinger of everything good and perfect that man has learnt to do with food.

"Minette! Minette!" he called, placing himself upwind, so that the evening breeze from the Loire would carry the fragrance to every corner of the courtyard where the missing Minette might be lurking. And still there came no answer.

Some time later, painfully and heart-broken and still bearing the dish, he returned to the kitchen where, at the late hour just before midnight, he found an unaccustomed activity sparked by Madame Bonneval. Coffee was brewing, a *soufflé* was in the process of being mixed by Brazon, and the other half of the *Poularde Surprise Royale* was missing.

"Ah, there you are," Madame greeted him. "What a fortunate thing you decided to cook a *poularde*! Only fifteen minutes ago there arrived a traveller, a poor fellow whose car had broken down. He was starving, and begged for a bit of something cold left over. You can imagine how agreeably surprised he was when I was able to set before him your speciality. He is drinking a bottle of the '47 Loiret Suchez with it."

Monsieur Bonneval stared at his wife, aghast. "But, *Maman!* It is impossible. I cooked this for poor little Minette, whom I kicked so bru—"

He did not finish, for the door leading from the dining-room opened violently, admitting an excited, bespectacled little man with a soup-strainer moustache, wearing a seedy suit, but whose eyes and expression nevertheless appeared to command authority.

He paused for a moment *en tableau*, looking from one to another in the kitchen. Then he rushed to Monsieur Bonneval, threw his arms about him, and kissed him violently on both cheeks.

"It is you!" he cried. "You are the magician who has prepared this delectable, this fabulous, this supreme dish! Chef! Genius! Master! I salute you! Not in thirty-five years have I eaten such a *Poularde Surprise Royale.* And at midnight! A palace of gastronomy, a Sorbonne of cookery! Well, you shall have your reward. A star—no, what am I saying?—two stars!"

And here he paused, and his look changed gradually to one of cunning. "Three stars if you will tell me the secret ingredient in the *poularde*, the only one I was not able to recognize."

Monsieur Bonneval could only gape at him. Could it have been then that the other, that fat one, was not Monsieur Michelin Taster? "I do not—understand," he stammered.

"But it is simple, dear master," the man replied. "Know then that I am Fernand Dumaire, Inspector for the Guide Michelin. I was on my way here to test your cookery when that villain of a vehicle ceased to function. And then, to arrive at midnight and at once to find set before me this masterpiece! Of two stars you are certain, but as a little deal between us, I shall risk the third in exchange for your secret ingredient!"

"The—secret—ingredient?" Monsieur Bonneval repeated.

"But of course. Naturally, I recognized the chervil and the delicate touch of burnet. It took courage to use the basil, and the idea of applying the marjoram to offset the tarragon was capital, while the amount of thyme and sage was perfectly balanced. I should judge the Oporto in the sauce was a trifle more dry than is usual—probably a '39—and the champagne, of course, was Bollinger '43, as anyone with half a palate would notice.

"But one flavour baffles and escapes me, and I, Fernand Dumaire, must know what it is. For you have changed, improved, and glorified *Poularde Surprise Royale*. It has become a new creation and you shall have the honour of naming it. But first tell me the ingredient that has baffled me, in exchange for the third star. Is it a bargain?"

There was a moment of silence. Then Monsieur Bonneval said slowly, "I cannot tell you, Monsieur. I shall be content with the two stars you so generously promised me."

Madame Bonneval stared at her husband as though he were out of his mind, but the taster again fell on his neck and kissed him. "You are right, my friend, and noble, and honest. A great chef must never reveal his secrets. I tempted you and you resisted. Well, two stars and five spoons and forks will distinguish you so that the world will beat a path to your kitchen."

At this moment there was an interruption. There came a sweet little call from the outer darkness, and Minette loped into the room, a thin and shapely Minette, though now more cross-eyed with love than ever. She deposited a new-born kitten in the box that had been made ready at the side of the stove. She retired. She came back with another kitten, and another, and another.

Thirteen times she departed and returned, as they watched and counted, fascinated, and tears of joy flowed from the eyes of Monsieur Bonneval.

When the last one had been deposited and Minette started nursing, Monsieur Bonneval declared with deep feeling, "You said, Monsieur, that I might name my *poularde*. Very well. I name it *Poularde Surprise Treize Minets*."

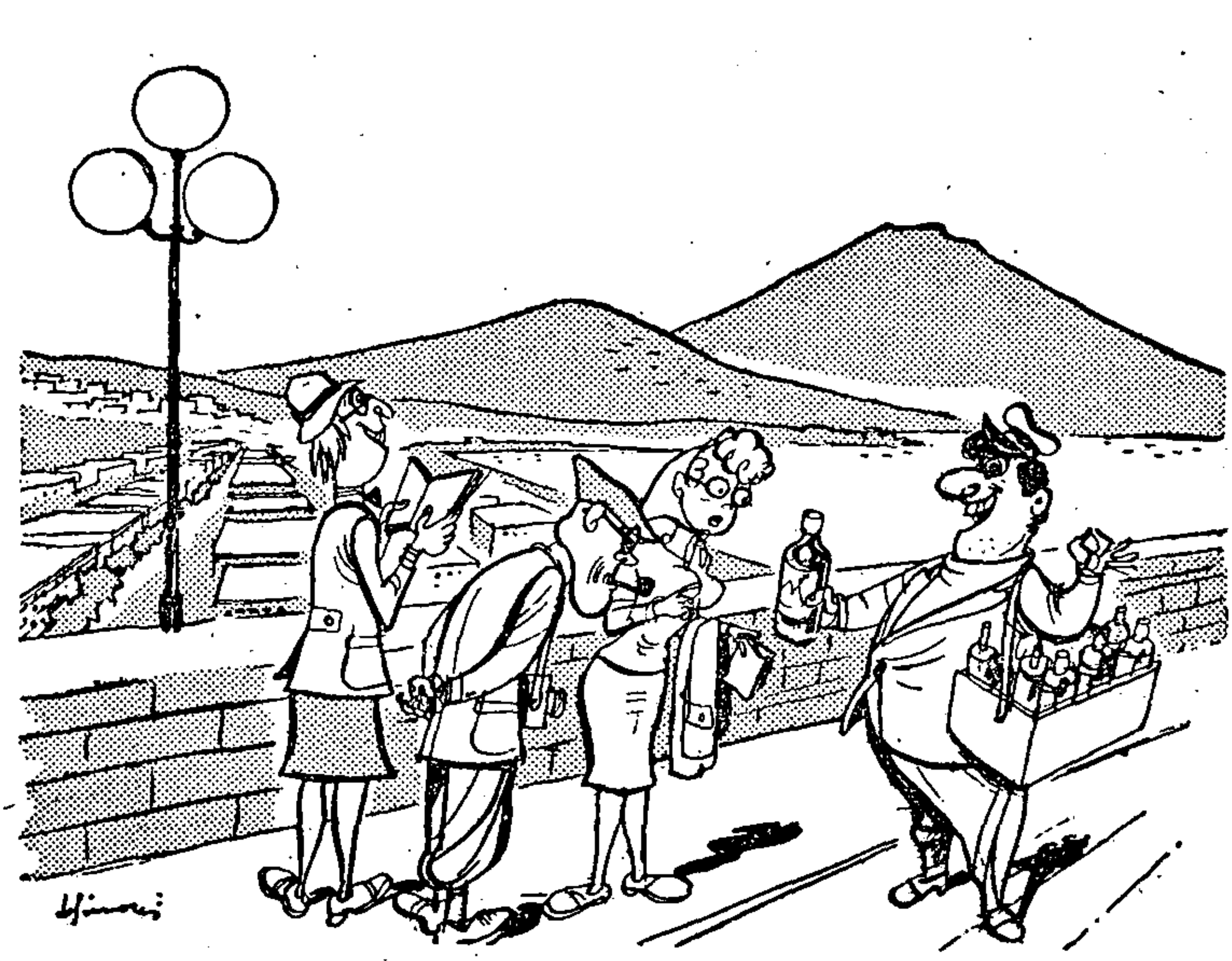
At this moment Brazon produced the *soufflé au curaçao* prepared from the recipe of Monsieur Bonneval, a dream, a vision, high, potent, sturdy, uncollapsible, a beige cloud, with the interior construction apparently of reinforced steel.

They joined round the table and with a Moët & Chandon '37 toasted the two stars of Monsieur Bonneval and the *Poularde Surprise Treize Minets*.

So, the next time you tour France and drop in at the Auberge Loiret to partake of Monsieur Bonneval's delectable "chicken à la th[illegible]n kittens," do not, I beg of you, let on that I have given away his secret ingredient and the reason why he could not reveal it even for the honour and accolade of the third star.

It was simple, but a trifle unusual.

As you have already suspected, for love of Minette he had seasoned the *poularde* liberally with that herb beloved of all felines, the strongly-scented leaves of *nepeta cataria*, a plant better known to one and all as catmint.



"Here y'are, smoke from Mount Vesuvius."

PAGODA WELL

"I can carry out orders," he said
"and I can keep my mouth shut"

BY BERKELY MATHER

THERE were six of them in the waiting-room when Sefton arrived. He ran a cursory eye over them, then went down again and hung about in the doorway of a gents' haberdasher on the other side of the Strand.

He had not been worried by what he saw, but let there be a dignity about all things . . . even applying for a job. There were two young men in duffel coats, one of them with a beard; a hard-bitten elderly character who might have been an ex-bosun from the Irrawaddy Flotilla; two one-time sahibs who looked absurdly alike in their yellowing bloodlessness; and a woman who looked as if she had just crossed the Gobi on a camel. If this was the short list he was willing to bet on his chances.

He had lit his sixth cigarette by the time the last of them emerged, so he nipped it economically, crossed through the mid-morning traffic, and went up the narrow stairs again. A clerk took his name and, after a brief wait, led him through to an inner office. A lanky, elderly man rose from behind a littered desk and held out his hand.

"Mr. Sefton?" he inquired. "Sorry if I've kept you waiting. Please sit down. You must excuse this mess—my agent has lent me his office for these interviews."

Sefton bowed, sat, balanced his hat on his knees, and waited. The other man gazed at a spot on the wall over Sefton's head, screwed up his eyes, and pursed his lips. As phony as the papers say he is, Sefton thought, and added savagely, Silly old goat.

Minutes ticked by, traffic rumbled outside, and from nearby Charing Cross an engine whistled shrilly.

At last the old man broke the silence. "There have been many other applicants, Mr. Sefton," he said softly.

"Which you short-listed down to seven—none of whom, so far, has suited," Sefton answered. "I hope I shall. I am very keen to join you."

The other looked slightly nettled. "May I ask where you gathered that information?"

"Counted heads in the waiting-room when I arrived and then timed their exits from across the street. None of them stayed long." His grin robbed the statement of offence. "I think I'm your man, Professor Neave."

"That remains to be seen," Neave answered. He shuffled through a file of letters in front of him and selected one that Sefton recognized as his own. "Would you care to elaborate on this a little?"

"Sure," answered Sefton promptly. "Eight years as assistant engineer with the Sontal Gem Mining Corporation in Mogok, Upper Burma. I speak good Burmese and can get by in most of the dialects—Shan, Chin, and Karen. I know the country well and was an M.T. officer in the Royal Indian Army Service Corps during the war. I get on with people, can take and carry out orders—" he paused very slightly—"and I can keep my mouth shut."

"Why did you leave the Sontal Corporation, Mr. Sefton?" the Professor asked.

"For the same reason as the rest of the staff—white, black, and brindle," Sefton told him. "The Japs were ten miles up the track and travelling fast. We sent the married men and their families to Rangoon before the rail and road link from Mandalay was cut; we ourselves set fire to the whole shebang and got out in the last vehicle to leave. We had only got to Yeu —that's just north of Bhamo—when our petrol gave out. We walked the rest of the way to the Chindwin, right through the dry belt. I say 'we,' but only I made it. Dysentery, malaria, and starvation did for the rest. It was a bad year and the monsoon was late."

"How long did the journey take you?"

"Just over three months. Our speed was that of the sickest man."

"And then?"

Sefton shrugged. "Not much more to it. I crossed into Assam by the Tiddim Track and fell in with our forces in Imphal. I was a long time in hospital and then joined up. I fought my war with the Fourteenth Army and finished as a major."

"What have you been doing since?"

"I put my gratuity and savings into a small engineering shop in Lancashire in the first place, and lost the lot. Since then I've had a variety of jobs in my own line of country—deep drilling in Brazil, and I've been up the Gulf with an oil concern, among other things."

"Are you married?"

"No, and I haven't a soul in the world dependent upon me."

"What remuneration would you expect?"

"I don't want anything, except to go with you."

The Professor brightened visibly for a moment and then covered up. "I don't understand, Mr. Sefton," he said.

Sefton leaned forward. "I told you I'd had a series of jobs, Professor," he said earnestly. "All of them have been reasonably well paid, and each one I left of my own accord—often in the face of strong persuasion to stay on. Restlessness, footlooseness —call it what you like—but I know I'll never be able to settle down until I get it out of my system."

"Get what out of your system?"

Sefton paused and gazed out of the window for a full minute before answering.

"It's hard to say," he said at length. "Put it this way. I was a reasonably settled young man with a career ahead of me with Sontal. The war finished all that. The Corporation never started up again. I had seen my friends die in squalid circumstances on that trek and I'd been unable to help them. I'm not neurotic—but . . ." He spread his hands.

"Oh, hell, I don't know—I've just got a yen to go out there again, to see the places we walked through, to feel the sun beating down on me, and to get the stink of the jungle back into my nostrils. I want to face up to something I've been running away from all these years, and to realize how little it all means in retrospect." He stopped suddenly and looked abashed. "This must all sound very silly, Professor."

The Professor smiled. "Not at all. I think I understand. All right, Mr. Sefton; you've been very frank with me. Let me tell you something about myself and *my* reason for going out there."

He pushed a box of cigarettes across the table and Sefton, noting the virgin ashtray, realized that he was the first to be thus favoured and felt his confidence rise accordingly. "I take it that you know a little about me—my one-man expeditions, my modest reputation as an author and popular lecturer?"

Sefton looked suitably shocked, "Who doesn't, Professor?"

"None of the previous applicants, apparently," answered the Professor with more than a touch of sourness. "One young-man had heard, without particular interest, a fifteen-minute talk of mine on television; the woman confused me with Professor Lever, the ornithologist; while most of the others were far more interested in what I could pay them than in the journey and its objects.

"Still, be that as it may—I want a man who knows Upper Burma, who is prepared to rough it, who can drive one jeep and

maintain two, who, in short, is prepared to accompany me on a trip over the old Burma Road from Calcutta to as far as we can get towards the China border. I want a man who can relieve me of the chores while I collect material and take photos for my next lecture tour; but a man who, at the same time, would be rather more—er—intellectually congenial to me than the average paid employee."

He rose and held out his hand. "I think you might well be that man, Mr. Sefton."

In Sefton's heart was a paean of joy and relief.

He halted the jeep at the top of the last rise before Kohima. Down the winding road that led back towards Manipur he could see the second jeep snaking round the hairpin bends that multiplied the crow-flight distance tenfold.

The road had all but gone back to the jungle since he had last seen it in the closing days of the war. Then it had been a tarmac miracle of engineering that had carried four lines of heavy military traffic day and night. Now the teak-built culverts and Irish bridges had, for the most part, disintegrated. Sefton, breaking trail, had been forced to stop many times since they had crossed the Brahmaputra at Gauhati to allow the Professor to catch up.

He lit a cigarette and tried for the fiftieth time to fight down the feverish impatience that bedevilled him. Left to himself, he could have driven through to the dry belt in a week; but with this old fool's insistence on stopping to take photographs, and his maddening refusal to travel in the heat of the afternoon, it looked as if the time might well be quadrupled. And now it seemed more than probable that they would be held up in Imphal.

The Indian Government was engaged in sporadic jungle fighting with the Naga tribes who, promised their autonomy when the British left, were demanding it in terms that bordered on small-scale warfare.

Politics—politics—politics. Only politics had stopped his getting into Upper Burma twice before. People's Popular Front against Burmese Liberation Brotherhood or some such shibboleth. Karens versus Chins. What the hell had it to do with him? All he wanted was a couple of hours in a pagoda near Yeu . . . .

The Professor had arrived now. He pulled up triumphantly in the very spot he should have avoided, and Sefton bellowed wrathfully. "For heaven's sake, how many times have I told you not to stop in mud?"

He strode over, pushed the old man roughly out of the driving seat, and jabbed furiously at the starter. The engine roared but

the wheels spun impotently. He cursed and snatched the tow-rope out of his own jeep. For the twentieth time he yanked the Professor on to firm ground.

"There are certain fundamental rules for jungle M.T. work," he ground out through clenched teeth.

"There are certain fundamental rules for good manners, too," answered the Professor tartly. "Things are getting a little out of hand, Sefton. I would remind you that, although you are not drawing a salary, I am in charge of this expedition."

"You want to get across Upper Burma to the Chinese border, don't you?" snarled Sefton. "O.K. then, suppose you leave it to someone who knows, and do as you're damn well told."

"This is not my first experience of the jungle." Neave was thoroughly angry now. "If things are to go on like this I would much prefer to take on a paid driver from Imphal and to pay your passage back to Calcutta by lorry."

Sefton recognized danger signs and temporized. "I'm sorry, Professor," he said, and drew his hand wearily over his brow. "All this brings things back—and I think I have a touch of fever coming on." He smiled bravely. "You were quite right to slap me down. I'll behave from now on."

The Professor accepted his apology with a slight inclination of his head and turned stiffly back to his jeep.

Once over the Chindwin, thought Sefton, as they started off again, and you can go to blazes. I'll have to watch my step till then; I don't want to be left stranded when I'm this close.

The old man's Delhi-endorsed papers took them through the check-point at Imphal without question and with an offer, which Sefton politely declined, of an escort as far as the border. They camped that night at the top of the Tiddim Track where rusting Japanese tanks made green hillocks under the creeping undergrowth which still, after twelve years, could not altogether cover the scars of that last fierce battle.

Sefton lay under his mosquito net and watched the pre-monsoon clouds gathering over the pass and blotting out the stars. They had been gathering that night when he crossed.

He stretched out on his camp bed and listened to the jungle night-sounds and the Professor's gentle snores from the other side of the fire. His thoughts went back over the years.

At first there had been five of them, beside himself, in that crazy truck.

Findlay, the Scottish manager—tall, grim, and ascetic—who was a Sanskrit scholar and, some said, a secret convert to Buddhism; Muirson, the Eurasian clerk; the two Karen coolies, and Ngu Pah, the pretty little Burmese nurse who had

insisted on standing by her tiny hospital until the last moment.

The Karens had deserted early. Muirson, opium-besotted and malarial, had died at the end of the third week. That left the three of them.

Three oddly-assorted people on foot, in the middle of the freakish dry belt, after the truck had finally petered out.

There was a well in the pagoda to which they had struggled before Findlay collapsed. Ngu Pah, the lightest of them, had climbed down the rotten rope to see if any dribble of water remained in the sand at the bottom. It had been bone dry, though. The rope had broken as she struggled back, leaving her clinging to the masonry a few feet from the top. They had been hard put to it to rescue her.

It was that night that he had made his decision. Findlay could obviously go no farther, and Ngu Pah was showing signs of failing. Her tiny frame had borne the brunt of that hellish journey. She had carried her full share of the water and rations and, finally, the heavy wash-leather bag that Findlay would entrust to nobody but her.

Sefton knew what that bag contained: he had seen Findlay making his selection from the trays of pigeon-blood rubies, before they had dynamited the strong-room and set fire to the rest. There had been a lot of stuff to choose from, for they had been unable to send their usual shipments out to Rangoon for some months. That bag must have weighed seven pounds if it weighed an ounce. Seven pounds of uncut rubies.

After Findlay had handed it to her Ngu Pah had not let the bag out of her possession for an instant. She had even slung it round her neck when she climbed into the well.

Sefton wondered when she had first begun to suspect his intentions. For years he had tried to justify to himself that final act of treachery. He no longer bothered now. In Sefton's world it was every man for himself.

He had stolen the bag that night, while she slept and Findlay raved in his delirium. With it he had also stolen their last half gallon of water and the pitiful remains of their rations. Then he had set out on the last desperate stage to the Chindwin and safety.

She had cheated him, though—the slant-eyed little yellow devil. He made the discovery the night before he crossed the border. He had opened the bag to select carefully just what he could carry safely, meaning to cache the rest where, if the war went the right way, he could come back and collect them.

He remembered the feel of the rough sand and gravel that

poured over his hands as he untied the thong. He had screamed and grovelled in his rage out there in the jungle and then, when sanity returned, he thought about going back. But the Japs were closing in fast and he could see the smoke from burning villages a scant five miles behind him.

They couldn't have survived long. Findlay was almost finished when he left them, and Ngu Pah couldn't have lowered herself into the well again because the rope had snapped.

He had often tortured himself with the possibility of the girl surviving the war and going back, but he had brushed that aside. Without food and water she could not have lasted another week. No, the rubies were still there, at the bottom of the well. Of that he was convinced.

Twice he had raised the money and gone out to Rangoon on the pretext of starting up in engineering but, try as he would, he had been unable to get permission to go through to Upper Burma. There had been constant internecine warfare along the line of the Irrawaddy since the British had left, and both sides regarded visitors with suspicion. He had tried it without permission and narrowly missed being shot for his pains.

The third time he had attempted to go out they had refused him a visa, as also had the Indian Government when he applied for a mining licence in the Shan hills. The Professor's advertisement had been the answer to everything.

He would *get* there this time—by God, he would.

His plan of action was made. Their road lay through Yeu —there was no other way in. He would go down with a simulated attack of malaria there. The way to Mandalay was easy, so he would persuade the Professor to go on alone, promising to catch up with him in a few days. They weren't on such friendly terms that the old man would boggle much at that. He would catch up, too; but then he'd quit. He had enough ready cash to pay his way back to England, and more than enough cunning to get the stones in with him.

He grunted, flicked his cigarette into the damp undergrowth, swatted a mosquito, and dropped quietly off to sleep.

They reached Yeu four days later without incident, except for a few further bog-downs on the Professor's part. Sefton had suffered from malaria often enough to be able to simulate the symptoms with a degree of realism that frightened the other man. He even had the forethought to break the thermometer in the medicine chest, so that his temperature would not give the lie to his agonized shaking.

He had no difficulty in recognizing the turning to the pagoda as

they drove past it that last afternoon. It was a few miles east of a tiny village that had been deserted in those panic-stricken days, but was now repopulated. There was a well there which might have saved the other two, had they known about it.

A yellow-robed priest sat under a spreading peepul tree, at the junction of road and track, with a brass begging-bowl before him for the offerings of the faithful. He was the first they had seen since crossing the Chindwin and the Professor was delighted, in spite of his preoccupation with Sefton's fever. He leapt out of his jeep, camera at the ready, but the priest dropped his eyes to the ground and covered his shaven head with a fold of his robe.

"The camera is a form of evil eye," Sefton explained. "These pongyis don't like 'em. Come on, plenty more of the idle devils where we are going. There's a whole monastery full of them in Yeu. I'll be glad to get there; I'm feeling lousy."

They put up at the monastery rest-house. While Sefton realistically recuperated for a couple of days, the Professor wandered about happily with his camera. He was mildly indignant at Sefton's suggestion that he should go on alone, but the latter worked on him skilfully.

The Buddhist Feast of the Tooth would be starting in Meiktila. The faithful came from all parts of Asia for this—there were opportunities for photography that it would be a crime to miss. Just in time for the first rafts of teak coming down the Irrawaddy with the break of the monsoon. Be all right here; the monks are pretty decent to travellers. Catch up in Mandalay in a week, as fit as a flea again.

The old man at last capitulated, and with many a guilty backward glance, went on his way. Sefton gave him half a day for safety, and then set off back along the road.

The priest was still there when he came to the turning, contemplating Infinity and the rice-filled bowl before him. Sefton swung the jeep round the hairpin bend and began the long ascent to the pagoda.

He had no fear of it being occupied. They built these things on the top of practically every hill in Upper Burma, put a statue of the Buddha inside, a couple of dragon-like chinthes outside to guard him against evil spirits, dug a well for his refreshment, and thereafter avoided the place like the plague.

It was just as he had last seen it. Perhaps the purple bougainvillaea over the archway spanning the entrance to the small courtyard was a little more luxuriant, and perhaps the monsoon rains, short-lived but fierce in these parts, had washed some more of the white plaster from the pinnacled roof, but the Buddha was unaged, sitting with feet crossed beneath him, soles upward,

forefinger and thumb of the right hand grasping the little finger of the other, jewelled lotus on his brow, as serenely as he had sat and watched fifteen years before.

He drove on a hundred yards or so and hid the jeep in a bamboo thicket. It was not necessary. Nobody but the priest had seen him come this way, and even if anyone had, no Burmese would dream of walking a mile or so uphill to investigate. It was the secretiveness of his nature that made him do it, just as beasts of the jungle are at pains to conceal their tracks even when no danger threatens.

He took a coil of rope and an electric torch from the tool-box and hurried back. He was sweating now, in spite of the evening chilliness. His heart was hammering and his breath was coming in short, sharp gasps that almost choked him.

There was a carpet of dead leaves inside, that rustled and crackled under his feet as he skirted the image and went round to the well at the back. The shaft was pitch black, and went down so far that the beam of the powerful torch only feebly illuminated the bottom of it.

Dropping a stone, he heard with satisfaction the dull thud that betokened the absence of water. The damned thing had probably always been dry! There were some, Findlay among them, who said that these shafts had never been intended as wells at all, but were relics of some older and darker religion in which they had figured in other and more sinister roles—that involved human sacrifices.

Knotting the rope round a projecting stone cornice, he paid it out into the darkness until its slackness told him it had reached bottom; then he swung his legs over and began his descent.

The going was easy at first, for the masonry was rough and offered some purchase for his feet. It had been these precarious footholds which had saved Ngu Pah. Lower down, however, the shaft became marble smooth, and he was glad he had had the forethought to wear rope-soled espadrilles.

The ease with which he found the stones came in the nature of an anticlimax, and with a shock of unreality that was almost a disappointment. He felt like a child who had been set too simple a task in a party game.

He saw them in the beam of his torch even as his feet touched the sand. They lay on a ledge in the masonry, wrapped in the rotting remains of a once-bright blue silk scarf—a heap of dull pebbles which, even in their uncut and unpolished state, threw back the light of the torch in a reddish effulgence.

He wanted to shout and to sing, to throw them up into the air

in fistfuls. His heart hammered in a mad cadenza of exaltation that almost brought on an attack of nausea. He sat down in the sand and lit a cigarette with trembling hands, then trained the beam of the torch on them and just gazed.

It was a good ten minutes before he was steady enough to remove his sweat-soaked shirt and scoop the rubies into it. And a further agonizing ten minutes before he was satisfied with the security of the bag he made of it. He fastened the bag under his belt; then, belaying the rope twice round his waist, he began the hard climb back.

He had gone a good fifteen feet—his body at a stiff right angle, feet pressed firmly against the side of the well, before it happened. He was not aware of falling.

The first realization came to him as he lay flat on his back in the sand, with the rope coiled loosely about him, and beside him the chunk of masonry that had missed his head by inches.

He started to scream then, shrilly and horribly. And he was still screaming and tearing at the sides of the well when the light at the top of the shaft was blotted out by the head and shoulders of a man, a man with a shaven poll and a swathe of yellow cotton across his chest. He could not make out the face, but he knew it was the priest from the track junction.

He stopped screaming and started to babble in Burmese.

The priest answered in English with a strong Edinburgh accent. "I knew you'd be back for them, Sefton, in the fullness of time."

Sefton tried to speak but his throat muscles refused to function.

The voice went on. "Ay, vultures always return to their carrion—and that is what these stones are. I intended to steal them from my employers in the first place. I had already broken faith by intent. It was that knowledge that brought me to the samadhi of the Middle Way. These robes are not a disguise, Sefton; they are my atonement."

Mad, thought Sefton, and fought down another wave of hysteria.

"Findlay!" he called shakily. "Findlay, I came back to see if I could find any trace of you. I haven't rested, Findlay, in all these years—"

"That I can well believe," answered Findlay. "A man cannot escape his karma. Well, you have the chance to make your peace now—as I have."

"Findlay, you can't do this to me—you can't murder me . . ." He was gibbering now.

"I have done nothing. In your greed you tied your rope to an unsafe stone. Do you not see the symbolism of it?"

"Findlay, Findlay, listen to me. I know what you must have thought at the time, but I went off to find food, water, for all of us. I couldn't return, Findlay—before God, I couldn't—I got lost, and then I fell ill myself. I wandered for weeks before I was picked up and then I'd lost my memory. You've got to believe me, Findlay; you've *got* to . . ."

Findlay appeared not to hear him. His voice droned on dreamily. "Aye, the divine symbolism of it all—the sacrifice of little Ngu Pah. Three times she made that five-mile journey for water and food for me after you had stolen our reserve. She died on her return from the last and I made shift to bury her under the bougainvillaea at the gate. Did ye no' sense something as you entered, or had your greed blinded you to everything except those scraps of crystallized alumina?"

"I don't want your damned rubies—"

"They're not mine, or yours," Findlay answered. "They've returned to the earth that formed them. Down there they can do no more harm."

"All right, then; let them stay here." He sank to his knees in the sand. "But you've got to help me out, Findlay."

"I can neither help nor hinder you, Sefton. That is your karma—as this is mine." Findlay held his hands over the opening of the shaft.

Against the patch of light Sefton saw, with a fresh turning of his stomach, that the fingers had degenerated into formless stubs.

"Leprosy, Sefton—a curse turned blessing, because it was only that which prevented my taking the jewels out, thereby giving me a chance of atonement and peace."

"You can't leave me here. That's murder. You're a Buddhist, you say—Buddhists can't kill, not even animals. Get another rope, Findlay; get another rope." His voice had dropped to a pleading whisper.

"I shall not kill you, Sefton," said Findlay, "not even by negation. You must make your own choice, though. If I get another rope I cannot tie it securely. I must, therefore, get help from the village. You must come up empty-handed. I should insist on that, and ask the villagers' assistance if you broke faith."

"The—the other choice?" Sefton croaked.

"I shall drop food and water to you for as long as you need it."

Sefton screamed again. "Listen, Findlay," he babbled, "there's money down here—millions of it. Be sensible. They have cures for leprosy in Europe now. You could get a pair of hands that'd do everything your own could. There's enough

here and to spare for both of us. Get a rope long enough to loop round the statue and drop both ends to me. You needn't try to tie it. Just let me come up so we can talk it over. If you don't agree with what I say, I'll go away peacefully and never come back—I swear it . . ."

"If you came up and I were alone, Sefton, you'd kill me," Findlay said. "You know that is in your heart already. I couldn't prevent you—nor would I try—but if that happened I would be robbing you of any chance you may still have of finding peace. That would be against the teaching of the Middle Way. We are all involved in the destiny of others, and a man may not stand by and watch another destroy himself."

Sefton broke then. He fell forward on his face and pounded on the sand with his fists and howled like an animal in torment.

The villagers hauled him up at midnight, and the monks at Yeu tended him carefully until the Professor, worried at his non-arrival in Mandalay, came back to look for him.

They shipped him home to a large house set behind high walls in the quietness of the English countryside where he has found peace, except when the moon is full. Then he screams about rubies and ropes and a priest who is fed by the faithful at the roadside.

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"I'll bet I know who he is—the god of tipping."

SEARCHING FOR SUMMER

" Honeymooners, eh? " he said

BY JOAN AIKEN

LILY wore yellow on her wedding day. In the 'seventies people put a lot of faith in omens, and believed that if a bride's dress was yellow her married life would be blessed with a bit of sunshine.

It was years since the bombs had been banned, but still the cloud never lifted. Whitish grey, day after day, sometimes darkening to a weeping slate-colour or, at the end of an evening, turning to smoky copper, the sky endlessly, secretively brooded.

Old people began their stories with the classic, fairy-tale opening: " Long, long ago, when I was a liddle 'un, in the days when the sky was blue . . ." and children, listening, chuckled among themselves at the absurd thought because, *blue*, imagine it! How could the sky ever have been *blue*? You might as well say, " In the days when the grass was pink."

Stars, rainbows, and all other such heavenly sideshows had been permanently withdrawn, and if the radio announced that there was a blink of sunshine in such-and-such a place, where the cloud-belt had thinned for half an hour, cars and coaches would pour in that direction for days, in an unavailing search for warmth and light.

After the wedding, when all the relations were standing in the church porch, with Lily shivering prettily in her buttercup nylon, her father prodded the dour and withered grass on a grave—although it was August the leaves were hardly out yet—and said, " Well, Tom, what are you aiming to do now, eh? "

" Going to find a bit of sun and have our honeymoon in it," said Tom hardily.

There was a general laugh from the wedding party.

" Don't get sunburnt," shrilled Aunt Nancy.

" Better start off Bournemouth way. Paper said they had a half hour of sun last Friday week," Uncle Arthur weighed in.

" We'll come back brown as—as this grass," said Tom. And, ignoring the good-natured teasing from their families, the two

young people mounted their scooter, which stood ready at the churchyard wall, and chugged away in a shower of golden confetti.

When they were out of sight, and the yellow paper had subsided on the grey and gritty road, the Whitemores and the Hoskinses strolled off, sighing, to eat wedding-cake and drink currant wine, and old Mrs. Hoskins spoilt everyone's pleasure by bursting into tears as she thought of her own wedding-day when everything was so different.

Meanwhile Tom and Lily buzzed on hopefully across the grey countryside, with Lily's veil like a gilt banner floating behind. It was chilly going for her in her wedding things, but the sight of a bride was supposed to bring good luck and so she stuck it out, although her fingers were blue to the knuckles. Every now and then they switched on their portable radio and listened to the forecast. Inverness had seen the sun for ten minutes yesterday, and Southend for five minutes this morning, but that was all.

"Both those places are a long way from here," said Tom cheerfully. "All the more reason we'd find a nice bit of sunshine in these parts somewhere. Keep your eyes peeled, Lil, and tell me if you see a blink of sun on those hills ahead."

But they came to the hills and passed them, and a new range shouldered up ahead and then slid away behind, and still there was no flicker or patch of sunshine to be seen anywhere in the grey, winter-ridden landscape. Lily began to get discouraged, so they stopped for a cup of tea at a pull-up.

"Seen the sun lately, mate?" Tom asked the proprietor.

He laughed shortly. "Notice any coaches or caravans round here? Last time I saw the sun was two years ago September; came out just in time for the wife's birthday."

"It's stars I'd like to see," Lily said, looking wistfully at her dust-coloured tea. "Ever so pretty they must be."

"Well, better be getting on, I suppose," said Tom, but he had lost some of his bounce and confidence.

Every place they passed through looked nastier than the last, partly on account of the dismal light, partly because people had given up bothering to take a pride in their boroughs. And then, just as they were entering a village called Holesworth, the dimmest, drabbest, most insignificant huddle of houses they had come to yet, the engine coughed and died on them.

"Can't see what's wrong," said Tom, after a gloomy survey.

"Oh, Tom!" Lily was almost crying. "What'll we do?"

"Have to stop here for the night, s'pose." Tom was short-tempered with frustration. "Look, there's a garage just up the road. We can push the bike there, and they'll tell us if there's a pub where we can stay. It's nearly six, anyway."

They had taken the bike to the garage, and the man there was just telling them that the only pub in the village was The Rising Sun, where Mr. Noakes might be able to give them a bed, when a bus pulled up in front of the petrol pumps.

"Look," the garage owner said, "there's Mr. Noakes just getting out of the bus now. Sid!" he called.

But Mr. Noakes was not able to come to them at once. Two old people were climbing slowly out of the bus ahead of him: a blind man with a white stick, and a withered, frail old lady in a black satin dress and hat. "Careful now, George," she was saying, "mind 'ee be careful with my son William."

"I'm being careful, Mrs. Hatching," the conductor said patiently, as he almost lifted the unsteady old pair off the bus platform. The driver had stopped his engine, and everyone on the bus was taking a mild and sympathetic interest, except for Mr. Noakes just behind, who was cursing irritably at the delay.

When the two old people were on the narrow pavement, the conductor saw they were going to have trouble with a bicycle that was propped against the kerb; he picked it up and stood holding it until they had passed the line of petrol pumps and were going slowly off along a path across the fields. Then, grinning, he put it back, jumped hurriedly into the bus, and rang his bell.

"Old nuisances," Mr. Noakes said furiously. "Wasting public time. Every week that palaver goes on, taking the old man to Midwick Hospital Out-Patients and back again. I know what *I'd* do with 'em. Put to sleep, that sort ought to be."

Mr. Noakes was a repulsive-looking individual, but when he heard that Tom and Lily wanted a room for the night he changed completely and gave them a leer full of false goodwill. He was a big, red-faced man with wet lips, bulging pale-grey bloodshot eyes, and a crop of greasy black hair. He wore tennis shoes.

"Honeymooners, eh?" he said, looking sentimentally at Lily's pale prettiness. "Want a bed for the night, eh?" And he laughed a disgusting laugh that sounded like thick oil coming out of a bottle, heh-heh-heh-heh, and gave Lily a pinch on her arm.

Disengaging herself as politely as she could, she stooped and picked up something from the pavement. They followed Mr. Noakes glumly up the street to The Rising Sun.

While they were eating their baked beans Mr. Noakes stood over their table, grimacing at them. Lily unwisely confided to him that they were looking for a bit of sunshine.

Mr. Noakes's laughter nearly shook down the ramshackle building. "Sunshine! Oh my gawd! That's a good 'un! Hear that, Mother?" he bawled to his wife. "They're looking for a bit of sunshine. Why," he said, banging on the table till the baked

beans leapt about, " if I could find a bit of sunshine near here, permanent bit that is, d'ya know what I'd do? "

The young people looked at him inquiringly across the bread and marge.

" Lido, caravan-site, country-club, holiday camp—you wouldn't know the place. Land round here is dirt-cheap, I'd buy up the lot. Nothing but woods. I'd advertise. I'd have people flocking to this little dump from all over the country. But what a hope, what a hope, eh? Well, feeling better? Enjoyed your tea? Ready for bed? Heh-heh-heh-heh, bed's ready for you."

Avoiding one another's eyes, Tom and Lily stood up.

" I—I'd like to go for a bit of a walk first, Tom," Lily said in a small voice. " Look, I picked up that old lady's bag on the pavement, I didn't notice it till we'd done talking to Mr. Noakes, and by then she was out of sight. Should we take it back to her? "

" Good idea," said Tom, pouncing on the suggestion with relief. " Do you know where she lives, Mr. Noakes? "

" Who, old Ma Hatching? Sure, I know. She lives in the wood. But you don't want to go taking her bag back, not this time o' the evening you don't. Let her worry. She'll come asking for it in the morning."

" She walked so slowly," said Lily, holding the bag gently in her hands. It was very old, made of black velvet on two ring-handles, and embroidered with beaded roses. " I think we ought to take it to her, don't you, Tom? "

" Oh, very well, very well, have it your own way," Mr. Noakes said, winking at Tom. " Take that path by the garridge, you can't go wrong. I've never been there meself, but they live somewhere in that wood back o' the village, you'll find it soon enough."

They found the path soon enough, but not the cottage. Under the lowering sky they walked forward endlessly among trees that carried only rudimentary leaves, wizened and poverty-stricken. Lily was wearing her wedding sandals, which had begun to blister her. She held on to Tom's arm, biting her lip with the pain, and he looked down miserably at her bent brown head; everything had turned out so differently from what he had planned.

By the time they reached the cottage Lily could hardly bear to put her left foot to the ground, and Tom was gentling her along, " It can't be much farther now, and they'll be sure to have a bandage. I'll tie it up and you can have a sit-down. Maybe they'll give us a cup of tea. We could borrow an old pair of socks or something . . ." Hardly noticing the cottage garden, beyond a vague impression of rows of runner beans, they made

for the clematis-grown porch and knocked. There was a brass lion's head on the door, carefully polished.

"Eh, me dear!" It was old Mrs. Hatching who opened the door, and her exclamation was a long-drawn gasp of pleasure and astonishment. "Eh, me dear! 'Tis the pretty bride. See'd ye s'arternoon when we was coming home from hospital."

"Who be?" shouted a voice from inside.

"Come in, come in, me dears. My son, William, 'll be glad to hear company; he can't see, poor soul, nor has this thirty years—ah, and a pretty sight he's losing this minute—"

"We brought back your bag," Tom said, putting it in her hands, "and we wondered if you'd have a bit of plaster you could kindly let us have. My wife's hurt her foot—"

My wife. Even in the midst of Mrs. Hatching's voluble welcome the strangeness of these words struck the two young people. And they fell quiet, each of them, pondering, while Mrs. Hatching thanked and commiserated, all in a breath, and asked them to take a seat, and fetched a basin of water, William from the chimney-corner demanding to know what it was all about.

"Wot be doing? Wot be doing, Mother?"

"'Tis a bride, all in's finery," she shrilled back at him, "an's blistered her foot, poor heart." Keeping up a running commentary for William's benefit she bound up the foot, exclaiming to herself in wonder over the fineness of Lily's wedding-dress which lay in yellow nylon swathes round the chair. "There, me dear. Now us'll have a cup of tea, eh? Proper thirsty you'm fare to be, walking all the way to here this hot day."

Hot day?

Tom and Lily stared at each other and then round the room. Then it was true; it was not their imagination that a great dusty golden square of sunshine lay on the fireplace-wall where the brass pendulum of the clock at every swing blinked into sudden brilliance? That the blazing geraniums on the sill housed a drove of murmuring bees? That, through the window, the gleam of linen hung in the sun to whiten dazzled their eyes?

"The sun? Is it really the sun?" Tom said.

"And why not?" Mrs. Hatching demanded. "How else'll beans set, tell me that? Fine thing if sun were to stop shining, that 'ilt." Chuckling to herself she set out a Crown Derby tea-set, gorgeously-coloured in red and gold, and a baking of saffron buns. Then she sat down and, drinking her own tea, began to question the two of them about where they had come from, where they were going.

The tea was tawny and hot and sweet, the clock's tick was like a bird chirping, every now and then a log settled in the grate.

Lily looked sleepily round the little room, so rich and peaceful, and thought, I wish we were staying here. I wish we needn't go back to that horrible pub . . . She leaned against Tom's comforting arm. "Look at the sky," she whispered to him. "Out there between the geraniums. Blue!"

"And 'ee'll come up and see my spare bedroom, won't 'ee now?" Mrs. Hatching said, breaking off the thread of her questions—which indeed was not a thread, but merely a savouring of her pleasure and astonishment at this unlooked-for visit. "Bide here, why don't 'ee? Mid as well. The lil 'un's fair wore out. Us 'll do for 'ee better'n rangy old Noakes; proper old scoundrel 'e be. Won't us, William?"

"Ah," William said appreciatively, "I'll sing 'ee some songs."

A sight of the spare room settled any doubts. The great white bed, huge as a prairie, built up with layer upon solid layer of mattress, blanket, and quilt, almost filled the little shadowy room in which it stood. Brass rails shone in the green dimness.

"Isn't it quiet," Lily whispered.

Mrs. Hatching stood looking at them proudly, her bright eyes slowly moving from face to face. Her hand fondled, as if it might have been a baby's downy head, the yellow brass knob. And so, almost without any words, the matter was decided.

Three days later they remembered they must go to the village to collect the scooter which must, surely, be mended by now.

They had been helping old William pick a basketful of beans. Tom had taken his shirt off, and the sun gleamed on his brown back. Lily was wearing an old cotton print which Mrs. Hatching, with much chuckling, had shortened to fit her.

It was amazing how deftly, in spite of his blindness, William moved among the beans, feeling through the rough, rustling leaves for the stiffness of concealed pods. He found twice as many as Tom and Lily but they, even on the third day, were stopping every other minute to exclaim over the blueness of the sky.

At night they had sat on the back doorstep while Mrs. Hatching clucked inside as she dished up the supper, "Star-struck 'ee'll be! Come along in, do 'ee, before soup's cold; stars niver run away yet as I do know."

"Can we get anything for you in the village?" Lily asked, but Mrs. Hatching shook her head.

"Baker's bread and suchlike's no use but to cripple thee's innardses wi' colic. I been living here these eighty year wi'out troubling doctors and I'm not faring to begin now."

She waved to them and stood watching as they walked into the

wood, thin and frail beyond belief, but wiry, indomitable, her black eyes full of zest. Then she turned to scream menacingly at a couple of pullets who were scratching among the potatoes.

Almost at once they noticed, as they followed the path, that the sky was clouded over. "It *is* only there, on that one spot," Lily said in wonder. "All the time. And they've never even noticed that the sun doesn't shine in other places."

"That's how it was all over the world once," Tom said.

At the garage they found their scooter ready and waiting. They were about to start back when they ran into Mr. Noakes.

"Well, well, well, well, *well!*" he shouted with ferocious good humour. "How many wells make a river, eh? Where did you slip off to? We was just going to have the rivers dragged . . . But hullo, hullo, what's this? Brown, eh? Sun-tan?

"Scrumptious," he said, looking meltingly at Lily and giving her another tremendous pinch. "Where'd you get it, eh? That wasn't all got in half an hour, *I* know. Come on, this means money to you and me; tell us the big secret."

Tom and Lily looked at each other in horror. They thought of the cottage, the bees humming among the runner-beans, the sunlight glinting in the red-and-gold teacups. At night, when they had lain in the huge sagging bed, stars had shone through the window, and the wood was as quiet as the inside of a shell.

"Oh, we've been miles from here," Tom lied hurriedly. "We ran into a friend, and he took us right away beyond Brinsley." And as Mr. Noakes still looked suspicious and unsatisfied, he did the only thing possible. "We're going back there now," he said, "the sunbathing's grand." And, opening the throttle, he let the scooter go. They waved at Mr. Noakes and chugged off towards the grey hills that lay to the north.

"My wedding dress," Lily said sadly. "It's on our bed."

They wondered how long Mrs. Hatching would keep tea hot for them, who would eat all the pasties.

"Never mind, you won't need it again," Tom comforted her. At least, he thought, they had left the golden place undisturbed. Mr. Noakes had said he never went into the wood.

And they had done what they intended, they had found the sun. Now they, too, would be able to tell their grandchildren, when beginning a story, "Long, long ago, when we were young, in the days when the sky was blue . . ." © Joan Aiken 1958

★ ★ ★

SYMPATHETIC STRIKE

Notice on a barometer: Don't hit me, I am doing my best.

SEA CHANGE

GEORGE and Alice Smith alighted from their train at Biarritz one summer noon and in an hour had run through their hotel on to the beach, into the ocean, and out to bake upon the sand.

To see George Smith sprawled burning there, you'd think him only a tourist flown fresh as iced lettuce to Europe and soon to be shipped home. But here was a man who loved art more than life itself.

"There . . ." George Smith sighed. Another ounce of perspiration trickled down his chest. Boil out the Ohio tap-water, he thought, then drink down the best Bordeaux. Silt your blood with rich French sediment so you'll see with native eyes!

Why? Why eat, breathe, drink everything French? So that, given time, he might really begin to understand the genius of one man.

His mouth moved, forming a name.

"George?" His wife loomed over him. "I know what you've been thinking. I can read your lips."

He lay perfectly still, waiting. "And?"

"Picasso," she said.

He winced. Some day she would learn to pronounce that name.

"Please," she said. "Relax. I know you heard the rumour this morning, but you should see your eyes—your tic is back. All right, Picasso's here, down the coast a few miles away, visiting friends in some small fishing town. But you must forget it or our holiday's ruined."

"I wish I'd never heard the rumour," he said honestly.

"If only," she said, "you liked other painters."

Others? Yes, there were others.

BY RAY BRADBURY

He could breakfast most congenially on Caravaggio still-lifes of autumn pears and midnight plums. For lunch: those fire-squirting, thick-wormed Van Gogh sunflowers, those blooms a blind man might read with one rush of scorched fingers down fiery canvas.

But the great feast? The paintings he saved his palate for? There, filling the horizon, like Neptune risen, crowned with limeweed, alabaster, coral, paintbrushes clenched like tridents in horn-nailed fists, and with fishtail vast enough to fluke summer showers out over all Gibraltar—who else but the creator of Girl Before a Mirror and Guernica?

"Alice," he said patiently. "How can I explain? Coming down on the train I thought, Good heavens, it's *all* Picasso country!"

But was it really? he wondered. The sky, the land, the people, the flushed pink bricks here, scrolled electric-blue ironwork balconies there, a mandolin ripe as a fruit in some man's thousand-fingerprinting hands, poster-hoarding tatters blowing like confetti in night winds—how much was Picasso, how much George Smith staring round the world with wild Picasso eyes? He despaired of answering. That old man had distilled turpentines and linseed oils so thoroughly through George Smith that they shaped his being all Blue Period at twilight, all Rose Period at dawn.

"I keep thinking," he said aloud, "if we saved our money . . ."

"We'll never have five thousand dollars."

"I know," he said quietly. "But it's nice thinking we might bring it off some day. Wouldn't it be great just to step up to him, say, 'Pablo, here's five thousand dollars! Give us the sea, the sand, that sky, or any old thing you want, we'll be happy . . .'"

After a moment, his wife touched his arm. "I think you'd better go in the water now," she said.

"Yes," he said. "I'd better do just that."

White fire showered up where he cut the waves.

During the afternoon George Smith came out and went into the ocean with the vast, spilling motions of now warm, now cool people who at last, with the sun's decline, their bodies all lobster colours and colours of broiled squab and guinea-hen, trudged towards their wedding-cake hotels.

The beach lay deserted for endless mile on mile, save for two people. One was George Smith, towel over shoulder, out for a last devotional.

Far along the shore another, shorter, square-cut man walked alone in the tranquil weather. He was deeply tanned, his close-shaven head dyed almost mahogany by the sun, and his eyes were clear and bright as water in his face.

So the shoreline stage was set, and in a few minutes the two men would meet. And once again Fate fixed the scales for shocks and surprises, arrivals and departures. And all the while these two solitary strollers did not for a moment think on coincidence, that unswum stream which lingers at man's elbow with every crowd in every town. Nor did they ponder the fact that if man dares to dip into that stream he grabs a wonder in each hand. Like most they shrugged at such folly, and stayed well up the bank lest Fate should shove them in.

The stranger stood alone.

Glancing about, he saw his aloneness, saw the waters of the lovely bay, saw the sun sliding down the late colours of the day, and then, half turning, spied a small wooden object on the sand. It was no more than the slender stick from a lime ice-cream delicacy long since melted away. Smiling, he picked up the stick.

With another glance round to reinsure his solitude, the man stooped again and, holding the stick gently, with light sweeps of his hand began to do the one thing in all the world he knew best how to do.

He began to draw incredible figures along the sand.

He sketched one figure and then moved over and, still looking, down, completely focused on his work now, drew a second and a third figure, and after that a fourth and a fifth and a sixth . . .

George Smith, printing the shoreline with his feet, gazed here, gazed there, and then saw the man ahead. George Smith, drawing nearer, saw that the man, deeply tanned, was bending down. Nearer yet, and it was obvious what the man was up to. George

Smith chuckled. Of course, of course . . . alone on the beach this man, how old? sixty-five? seventy? was scribbling and doodling away.

How the sand flew! How the wild portraits flung themselves out there on the shore! How . . .

George Smith took one more step and stopped, very still.

The stranger was drawing and drawing and did not seem to sense that anyone stood immediately behind him and the world of his drawings in the sand. By now he was so deeply enchanted with his solitudinous creation that depth-charges, set off in the bay, might not have stopped his flying hand nor turned him round.

George Smith looked down at the sand. And after a long while, looking, he began to tremble.

For there on the flat shore were pictures of Grecian lions and Mediterranean goats and maidens with flesh of sand like powdered gold and satyrs piping on hand-carved horns and children dancing, strewing flowers along and along the beach with lambs gambolling after and musicians skipping to their harps and lyres, and unicorns racing youths towards distant meadows, woodlands, ruined temples, and volcanoes.

Along the shore in a never-broken line, the hand, the wooden stylus of this man bent down in fever and raining perspiration, scribbled, ribboned, looped round, over, and up, across, in, out, stitched, whispered, stayed, then hurried on as if this travelling bacchanal must flourish to its end before the sun was put out by the sea. Twenty, thirty yards or more the nymphs and dryads and summer founts sprang up in unravelled hieroglyph.

And the sand, in the dying light, was the colour of molten copper on which was now slashed a message that any man in any time might read and savour down the years. Everything whirled and poised in its own wind and gravity. Now wine was being crushed from under the grape-blooded feet of dancing vintners' daughters, now steaming seas gave birth to coin-sheathed monsters while flowered kites strewed scent on blowing clouds . . . now . . . now . . . now . . .

The artist stopped.

George Smith drew back and stood away.

The artist glanced up, surprised to find someone so near. Then he simply stood there, looking from George Smith to his own creations flung like idle footprints down the way. He smiled at last and shrugged as if to say, look what I've done; see what a child! You will forgive me, won't you? One day or another we are all fools . . . You, too, perhaps? So allow an old fool this, eh? Good! Good!

But George Smith could only look at the little man with the sun-dark skin and the clear sharp eyes and say the man's name once, in a whisper, to himself.

They stood thus for perhaps another five seconds, George Smith staring at the sand-frieze, and the artist watching George Smith with amused curiosity. George Smith opened his mouth, closed it, put out his hand, took it back. He stepped towards the pictures, stepped away. Then he moved along the line of figures, like a man viewing a precious series of marbles cast up from some ancient ruin on the shore. His eyes did not blink, his hand wanted to touch but did not dare to touch. He wanted to run but did not run.

He looked suddenly at the hotel. Run, yes! Run! What? Grab a shovel, dig, excavate, save a chunk of this all-too crumbling

sand? Find a builder, race him back here with plaster of Paris to cast a mould of some small fragile part of these? No, no. Silly, silly. Or . . .? His eyes flicked to his hotel window. The camera! Run, get it, get back, and hurry along the shore, clicking, changing film, clicking, until . . .

George Smith whirled to face the sun. It burnt faintly on his face, his eyes were two small fires from it. The sun was half under water and, as he watched, it sank the rest of the way in a matter of seconds.

The artist had drawn nearer and now was gazing into George Smith's face with great friendliness as if he were guessing every thought. Now he was nodding his head in a little bow. Now the ice-cream stick had fallen casually from his fingers. Now he

was saying good night, good night. Now he was gone, walking back down the beach towards the south.

George Smith stood looking after him.

After a full minute, he did the only thing that he could possibly do. He started at the beginning of the fantastic frieze of satyrs and fauns and wine-dipped maidens and prancing unicorns and piping youths, and he walked slowly along the shore.

He walked a long way, looking down at the free-running bacchanal. And when he came to the end of the animals and men he turned round and started back in the other direction, just staring down as if he had lost something and did not quite know where to find it. He kept on doing this until there was no more light in the sky, or on the sand, to see by.

He sat down at the dinner-table.

"You're late," said his wife. "I just had to come down alone. I'm ravenous."

"That's all right," he said.

"Anything interesting happen on your walk?" she asked.

"No," he said.

"You look funny. George, you didn't swim out too far, did you, and almost drown? I can tell by your face. You *did* swim out too far, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well," she said, watching him closely. "Don't ever do that again. Now—what'll you have?"

He picked up the menu, started to read it, and stopped suddenly.

"What's wrong?" asked his wife.

He turned his head and shut his eyes for a moment. "Listen."

She listened.

"I don't hear anything," she said.

"Don't you?"

"No. What is it?"

"Just the tide," he said after a while, sitting there, with his eyes still shut.

"Just the tide, coming in."

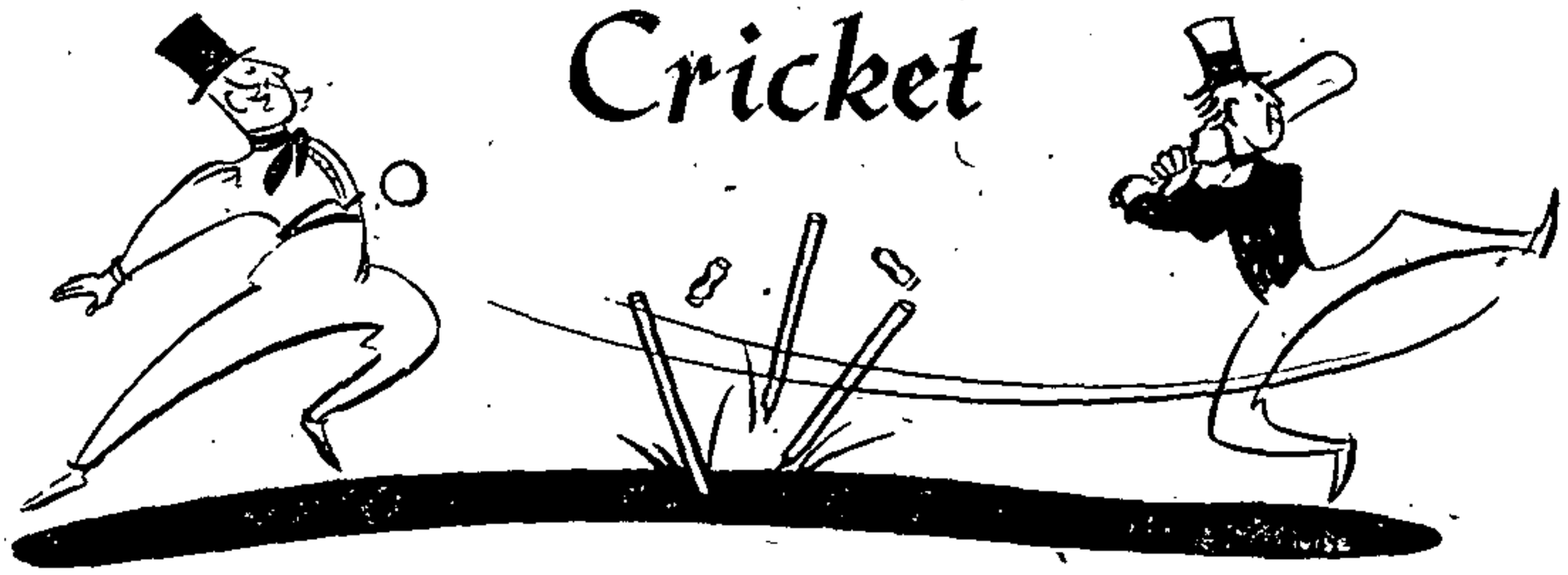
© Ray Bradbury 1958
Drawings by Picasso

GOLDEN PAVEMENTS

. . . And we will some new pleasures prove,
Of golden sands, and crystal brooks,
With silken lines, and silver hooks.

JOHN DONNE

Cricket



. . . and certainly it is a manly game, throwing open the chest, and strengthening the limbs, and the players so often in danger of being hit by the ball.

From Pips' Diary, 1849

Orders of Play

ERNEST: *Ah, if you had that fellow's head, Treherne, you would find something better to do with it than play cricket. I hear you bowl with your head.*

TREHERNE: *(With proper humility) I'm afraid cricket is all I'm good for, Ernest.*

CATHERINE: *(Who thinks he has a heavenly nose) Indeed, it isn't. You are sure to get on, Mr. Treherne.*

TREHERNE: *Thank you, Lady Catherine.*

CATHERINE: *But it was the bishop who told me so. He said a clergyman who breaks both ways is sure to get on in England.*

SIR JAMES BARRIE, *The Admirable Crichton*

Things That Matter

A wonderfully English game is cricket. One morning last summer at Kennington Oval the umpires walked magnificently on to the field a few minutes behind the clock. Arrived at the wicket, one of them bowled a ball to the other—just to remind us, it seemed, that he, too, in his time had been a mighty hunter before the Lord. Then the Somersetshire men moved easefully into view, and, after another dignified lapse of time, out came two Surrey batsmen. Whereupon one of these engaged himself with the umpire over the urgent matter of taking his guard. It was easy to imagine the conversation: "Middle and leg as usual, Tom." "That's the off stump." "How's this?" "Covers the leg." "That better?" "Covers the two, 'Arry." "Thanks,

Tom." Meanwhile the captain of Somersetshire, in earnest consultation with the bowler, had been waving his fieldsmen here and there; a gesture from him and some man in white passed far away into the bleak distances of the Oval field. And all the time the crowd waited. And at length the game went on. And the first ball, bless us, upset a wicket which was the last Surrey wicket of the innings. Whereupon the cricketers all moved out of our ken once more, the umpires last and looking impressive—Dogberrys of the cricket field! And the vast spaces of the Oval were empty again. Such is cricket—one sane thing, anyhow, in our mad world.

NEVILLE CARDUS, *Days in the Sun*

Bye a Hair's Breadth

Dr W. G. Grace
Had hair all over his face.
Lord! How the people cheered
When a ball got lost in his beard!

E. C. BENTLEY

Hands Off Ye Maiden?

When ye Ball is hit up, either of ye strikers may hinder ye catch in his running ground, or if she's hit directly across ye wickets, ye other Player may place his body anywhere within ye swing of his Batt, so as to hinder ye Bowler from catching her, but he must neither strike at her nor touch her with his hands.

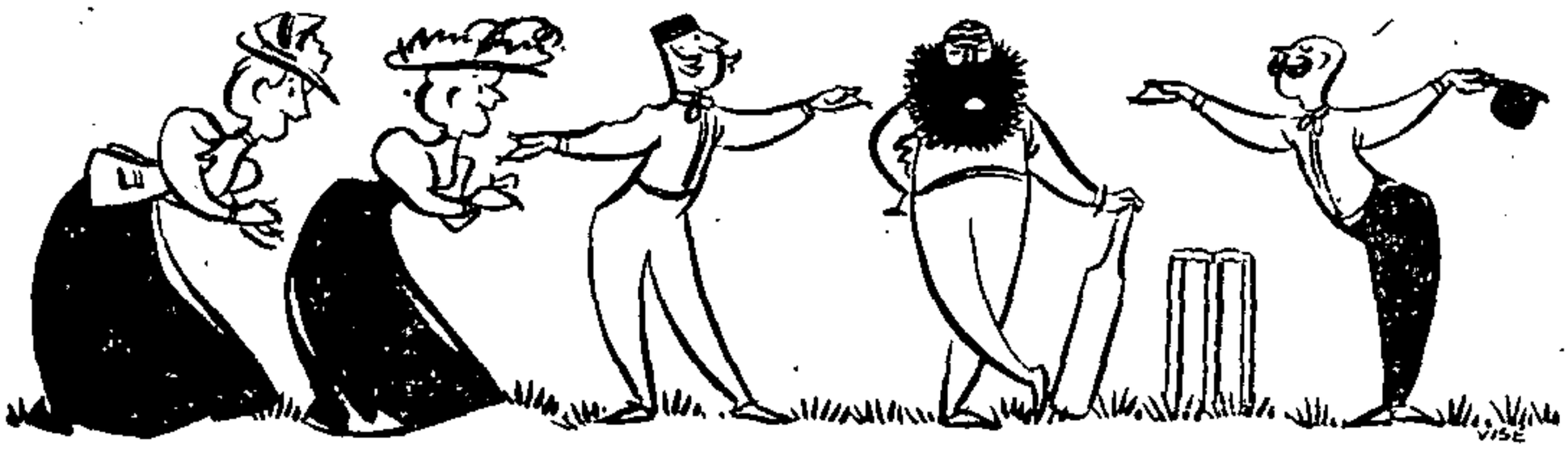
If a striker nips a ball up just before him, he may fall before his Wicket, or pop down his Batt before she comes to it, to save it.

Ye Bail hanging on one Stump, though ye Ball hit ye Wicket, its Not Out.

Rules of Cricket, 1744

And with five such mighty cricketers, 'twas but natural to win,
As Felix, Wenman, Hillyer, Fuller Pilch, and Alfred Mynn.

WILLIAM JEFFREY PROWSE, c. 1850



Gent or Player?

Mr. Edmund Blunden . . . on leave from Hongkong University, where he is Professor of English . . . said he was occasionally ordered to put on rubber-shoes to play in the university eleven, all Chinese players. The older Chinese had their own opinion of the game. When they saw him racing along the boundary to field the ball, they were puzzled and asked: "Why does he not employ servants to do that sort of thing?"

Report of National Book League Cricket Luncheon

Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And rude pavilions sadden all thy green;
One selfish pastime grasps the whole domain,
And half a faction swallows up the plain;
Adown thy glades, all sacrificed to cricket,
The hollow-sounding bat now guards the wicket;
Sunk are thy mounds in shapeless level all,
Lest aught impede the swiftly rolling ball . . .

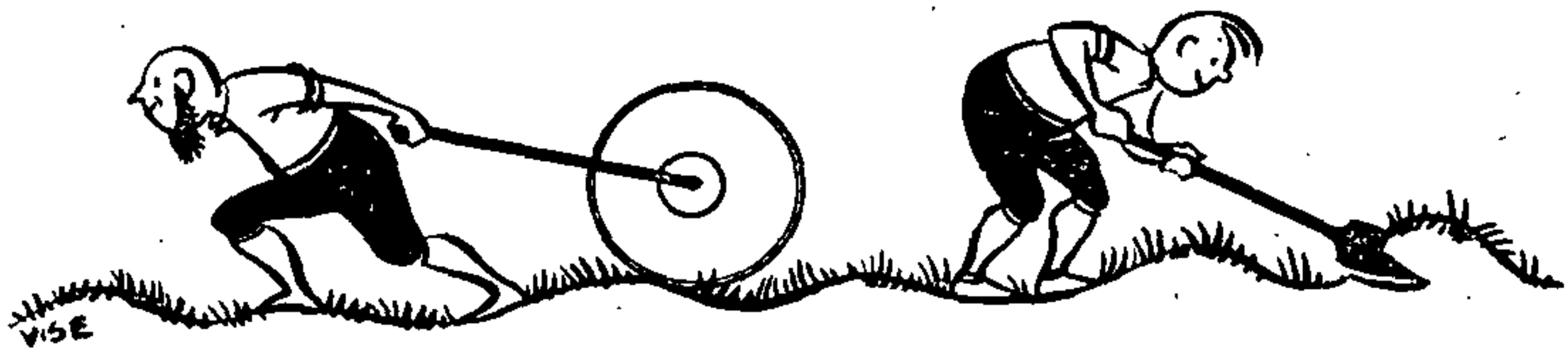
LEWIS CARROLL, *The Deserted Parks*, 1867

Case History

Cecil Charles Cowper Case . . . was a batsman who took every precaution. He was suspected of stopping shooters by the sheer intensity of his gaze. He was to be measured not so much by his runs as by the hours that he devoted to infuriating the bowlers . . .

Bowlers who didn't know might greet him with a smile of conscious superiority, saying to themselves: "Well, well; I've seen this sort before; here goes, first, an outswinger." Case left it alone, like a teetotaller eyeing the vodka. Next, a slower break-back; clang, it rolled dying from the bat's middle, and expired in front of short leg. A faster one; pushed for a single wide of mid-on. A half-volley; played to mid-off. All right, then, a long-hop; it hit the boundary with a smack at square-leg. And the bowler snatched his cap from the umpire, and walked muttering to his place.

R. C. ROBERTSON-GLASGOW, *Cricket Prints*



SHADOW OF THE TEMPLES

Some things were forbidden—
he alone knew the risk

BY HUGH B. CAVE

I WAS not aware that young Frank Miller was writing a history of Hoyo Hondo until he stepped into my tent one evening and showed me the manuscript. Our expedition had been investigating the Maya ruins in San Nicolas then for three months.

" I don't know that it amounts to anything," he said, with that engaging grin of his. He had always been modest about his work. " But if you'd care to look at it, Dr. Sanderson—"

" I certainly would."

I read his story that night and suggested that he should send it off to the *Explorer's Journal*, whose editor had asked me to let him have something about our work. A couple of weeks later we had a reply.

The manuscript might be usable, the editor wrote, if the author could fill it out a little. Of course, it wasn't an article on our work—simply a description of a mountain village. But this story of a village deep in the jungled mountains of San Nicolas, which had doomed many women to spinsterhood, was certainly no ordinary theme.

You will have to say more, though, about this unwritten law forbidding the young women to marry outsiders, and about La Calle del Castigo, the Street of Punishment. Such things can't simply be dropped into a story without amplification.

Frank was disappointed, as any would-be author might have been in the circumstances. But he got over it quickly, and said with a smile, " I suppose he's right. The piece is just a string of interesting facts, with no evidence to bear them out. I'll have to do more research. That is—if you think I ought to take the time."

" I'm as excited about Hoyo Hondo as you are," I said. " In my opinion it's probably the most unusual village in all Central America."

The place was founded by a group of Spanish conquistadores and their women, who moved south out of Mexico seeking a home when they quarrelled with the authorities there. From the very beginning they discouraged intrusion.

Its position worked in their favour. It was—still is—six hours' horseback ride from the coast, all but inaccessible even today. If they ever had a road, no trace of it remains. Part of the church they built is still standing, though, and some of the village streets are paved with stone in the old way. In La Calle del Castigo are two very old stone houses.

All this Frank had mentioned in his article. Now he went out and talked again to the villagers who worked for us at the camp—our camp was a couple of miles out in the jungle—and ended up by walking into the village one evening to call on an old fellow named José Margino.

Margino, the workers had warned him, would be difficult to talk to. And so he was, that first evening. But Frank went back, kept going back, and one night when he took along a statuette he'd found, the fellow's mood changed. Margino showed Frank some old maps and documents and a trunkful of jade beads and ornaments. Frank became enthusiastic over them, and they made friends.

"Tell me about your people," Frank begged. "Why are you so determined to remain in isolation here?"

Margino shrugged. "This is our valley. Our ancestors found it. Were we to permit outsiders to enter, there would be too little food and space for the many who would come, and our way of life would be destroyed."

"Why are there so few young men in Hoyo Hondo?" Frank asked. We had found almost no young men to work with the expedition, only old men and boys.

Margino drew a long face. "On reaching the age of ambition, the young ones go away to find work. It was not always so, but young men today are not content with the things their fathers had."

"Do they come back?"

"A few. When one does, it is usually to marry some girl who is waiting. But then, all too often, they go away again, taking the girls with them."

"Your women are forbidden to marry outsiders," Frank said. "Or so I have been told."

"There is an unwritten law."

"Tell me about it."

Occasionally, Margino said, a young woman defied custom and wedded a man not of the community, usually a mountain peasant

from beyond the valley. When this occurred, misfortune always blighted the union. "Perhaps what happens is not always accidental," he said. "Who knows, and who would inquire too closely? We believe in the old laws here. We live in the shadow of ancient temples. All about us in the jungle are stone gods of an age ruled by superstition."

"Tell me about the Street of Punishment. How did it get its name?"

"Because of a woman."

Frank waited, and after a moment of silence the old man pushed himself to his feet.

"Because of a woman who defied the unwritten law," he said. "La Calle del Castigo is not far from here. If you wish, we can go there and visit her."

Frank had walked through the street once before, out of curiosity, but not at night. At night market stalls were boarded up, doors and gates closed, the whole street was dark and silent.

"Our footfalls," Frank told me, "sounded as if unseen watchers were following us."

Margino tapped a heavy mahogany door with his cane. "It is centuries old, this house. One of the most ancient in the village."

The door creaked open, and Frank was momentarily blinded by the light of an upheld lamp. Then he saw the face behind the lamp and felt that he could not move or speak—that he would stand there for ever, staring, unless something broke the spell that held him.

If Hoyo Hondo girls are beautiful—and they are—this was surely the loveliest of them all. Black hair, dark eyes, skin like the flower they call—well, never mind. One can't describe beauty; one can only report its effect.

Its effect on Frank was, to use his own word, paralysing. Perhaps a man who had known more women, who had been in love a few times, might have been less affected. I don't know, but I doubt it.

"Good evening, padrecito."

With a little nod of her head she smiled at old Margino, then glanced questioningly at Frank. Margino murmured introductions, and with just the slightest hesitation she gave Frank her hand. It was soft and cool.

Her name was Lucia Cambas. She was the grand-daughter, Margino explained, of the woman they had come to see. Frank guessed she was about eighteen.

The house was larger that it had seemed from the street and far more pleásant. Lucia led them along a tile-floored corridor to a dim sitting-room facing a patio where sweet-scented flowers

grew like a mist round a minature pool. The room, too, was filled with blossoms, and furnished in old mahogany. Frank felt as though he had stepped into another century.

Senora Cambas, Lucia's mother, took his hand and murmured a few words, then returned to her chair and her needlework—a slender woman of forty or so, attractive, but reserved.

Margino led Frank to an older woman who had remained seated in a dim corner, her long-fingered hands in her lap. "This is Mrs. Fenton," he said.

"Fenton?" The name slipped out before Frank could stop it.

"Mrs. William Fenton," the old man said, bowing. "Senora, permit me to present a young friend from the archæology camp, Mr. Frank Miller."

The woman lifted a limp hand to acknowledge Frank's presence, and let it fall. She gazed at him with uncommonly bright eyes. "Our house is yours," she murmured.

Margino told her what Frank was doing. She invited him to sit down, but when the old man went to light the lamp on the table beside her chair, she stopped him with a gesture.

"What is it you wish to know, Mr. Miller?"

Frank felt uncomfortable; this sort of thing, after all, was new and strange to him. "When I asked Senor Margino how La Calle del Castigo got its unusual name, senora," he said, trying to feel his way, "he suggested you might tell me."

She was silent, but not still. Her sharp eyes studied his face, then her glance flicked across the lamplit room to its two other occupants—the girl, Lucia, who was arranging flowers in a vase, and the girl's mother, who sewed mechanically as though Frank did *not* exist.

"Yes, I can tell you," Mrs. Fenton said at last. "La Calle del Castigo was named forty years ago by the people of the village —on my account."

Frank waited, feeling oddly nervous.

"I was a young girl then," she said. "I was the age of Lucia here. Some say I was even as pretty as she is."

Having practically been invited to, Frank turned to look at Lucia. A line of colour crept up her throat and she lowered her gaze quickly.

"One day a young American came to Hoyo Hondo," the older woman went on. "Like you, he was interested in the civilization of the Mayas, but he came alone, with only a few tools and a camera. He rented a house in the village and every morning passed through this street—the Street of the Markets it was called then—on his way to the jungle. One morning I was buying some spices at a market stall, and we met."

The room was very still, Frank realized, and half turning his head he saw that Lucia and her mother were watching him, no longer pretending to be busy with flowers and needlework.

"There are some things a woman knows instinctively," Mrs. Fenton said. "I knew that I wanted this young American and would defy all the laws, written or unwritten, to have him. I did not tell him this, of course. I merely answered his polite 'Buenos dias, senorita,' with a smile. But he understood. He looked at me the way a man—well, the way you, Mr. Miller, looked at my grand-daughter a moment ago." She chuckled at Frank's start. "And that evening he came here to this house to call on me."

The mother of Lucia Cambas rose from her chair and came towards them. She looked angry. "You are too tired to talk so much, Mamma," she said.

"The young man wishes information."

"Some other time, perhaps."

"What better time than now?" Mrs. Fenton retorted, and waved her aside. "Well," she continued, returning her gaze to Frank, "you can guess what happened, I think. My parents ordered him from the house and I was forced to meet him elsewhere. The villagers threatened him with harm if he did not leave Hoyo Hondo. Even the priest ordered us to see no more of each other. So we ran away to the capital and were married there."

More than ever Frank felt that he had stepped into another century. "And then?" he asked.

"Perhaps it was the law of Hoyo Hondo; I do not know." She sighed, and for the first time looked away as though to hide the hurt of her memories. "We were living in the capital, where my husband had found work at the museum until I could learn English and return with him to America. We were happy. We had a child." She glanced at Lucia's mother. "Then one night he was working late, alone, and a great stone of the Mayas, a stele with a god of the Mayas carved upon it, fell on him from its pedestal—no one knows how. He was dead when they found him. I knew the unwritten law had killed him and I returned here to my parents' house with my child."

Suddenly, she seemed very tired, almost drained of life.

Frank stood up. "Thank you for telling me this, senora. I think I understand now."

"The Street of Punishment," she murmured. "My punishment."

Her daughter, obviously annoyed, placed a surprisingly firm hand on Frank's arm. "Senor, it is late for her." Old Margino nodded, and Frank saw that Lucia was waiting to show them out.

At the end of the tiled corridor, when he offered the girl his hand, she took it. She held it, and her gaze met his across the glow of the lamp.

"Thank you for coming," she whispered. "I—I think you have made my grandmother very happy."

What had happened there in the Street of Punishment does not happen every day. To many men such a swift realization of love never comes in a lifetime of hoping. Despite his youth, Frank knew that.

He called there again on the Saturday evening, this time alone. There was a festival of some sort in the town; the Street of Punishment was crowded and noisy, but when he stopped before the door and raised his hand to knock, the noise in his vicinity suddenly ceased. Every eye was on him. It was uncanny.

The door opened. This time the face he looked into was not Lucia's, but her mother's.

Frank asked if he might see Lucia.

"No." The woman moved nothing but her lips and her eyes, and her lips were thin with determination and her eyes were needle-points holding him at bay. "My daughter has retired."

It was a lie, of course. The evening was still young, and the streets full of singing and dancing. The girl was probably at her window that very moment, watching. She would know he was there.

But it was useless to argue. He left.

The following morning, Sunday, he went to the church and saw her there with her mother and grandmother, and managed to get within a few feet of her on the way out. Their glances met. If eyes can talk, theirs said a great deal in that quick exchange. Then her mother saw him and abruptly turned her away.

Frank came to see me. If Senora Cambas would not permit him to call on the girl, he would get into that house another way. He told me all that had happened—every word that had been spoken, every emotion he had felt. I might have been his father, the way he talked to me. But he was clever in his seeming innocence, too. He dwelt hard and long on William Fenton.

"Was there such a man?" he asked at last. His story had fired my curiosity as he had known it would.

"There was a William Fenton," I said, frowning at him, "unconventional sort of fellow but brilliant. He turned up all sorts of amazing things in Quintana Roo. I wonder—"

"The same man," Frank said. "It has to be. And he was here for months, Dr. Sanderson."

"Does Mrs. Fenton know what he found here?"

"We must ask to see her."

Lucia's mother could not refuse to open her door to me; the government of San Nicolas had ordered the residents of Hoyo Hondo to assist me in every way possible. Nor could she decently allow me to enter and keep Frank outside.

We talked to Mrs. Fenton for an hour and were served with coffee and pastries by Lucia before departing. And in shaking hands as we made our farewells, Frank managed to press a note into Lucia's palm.

In it he had written, *Can you meet me tomorrow at noon at the Sun Temple?* Noon, of course, was siesta time. Her mother and grandmother would be sleeping. And the Temple of the Sun was only a short distance from the excavations on which Frank was working.

But Lucia did not come. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday she did not come. When he went on Friday, convinced that she had no desire to see him, he was so surprised to find her there that he took both her hands in his before he could find a word to say.

It was not really necessary for them to talk. Everything had been said in Frank's note to her and in the fact that she was there at all.

When the wonder of it wore off a little they talked for an hour as though they had known each other always.

It was a strange place for a man and woman to discover their love for each other, there in the shadow of ancient walls decorated with gods and serpents, in the midst of the vast green jungle. But oddly appropriate, too—for their talk inevitably came back to the superstitious code of her people, and what he and she might do in their strange predicament.

"Do you believe in this curse, and the promised punishment, Lucia?" Frank asked.

"How can I believe otherwise, after what happened?"

"Your grandfather died far from here, in the museum at the capital, almost certainly by accident. Do you know any others who have paid the penalty?"

She knew of two. A very young girl of Hoyo Hondo had run away with a government census taker who had come to the village on official business six or seven years ago. The man had been shot to death in Falaz less than a month later, following a drunken quarrel.

Another girl of the village, who had defied the unwritten law to wed a man of the hills, had lived with her husband only a few weeks when he was drowned while crossing a flooded mountain stream on horseback.

"You see," she said, clinging desperately to Frank's hand, "it is always the man who pays the penalty."

"Superstitious nonsense," Frank said. But he knew it was not altogether nonsense. Nothing of the mind is nonsense—no belief, no conviction—because by its very nature it conditions one's actions and affects everything it touches. They would have to talk about this many times before Lucia could be persuaded to defy the law of her people . . .

They met daily thereafter, always at the same place because they were safe there from intrusion, and always at the same time. Their brief meetings seldom lasted an hour; she had to be back before her absence was discovered.

Her mother, she said, could never be won over. It was unthinkable.

"If she has her way, I will never marry anyone."

"Why?"

"Because her own marriage was not happy."

"But your father is dead, Lucia," he said.

She shook her head. "You know him. He works for your Dr. Sanderson." And she spoke a name that caused Frank to look at her in astonishment—the name of an intelligent, hard-working man whom we had put in charge of our best work crew. Cambas, of course, was a very common name in Hoyo Hondo. Not for a moment had it occurred to Frank that Alfredo was related to Lucia.

"He left her when I was only eight years old," she said. "For a time he came regularly to see me, then only on special days like Christmas and my birthday, and then not at all. I have never understood what happened. My mother will not talk about it."

"This is not another instance of a Hoyo Hondo woman marrying an outsider?" Frank asked.

"No, it is not that."

"Well," he said, feeling a little desperate, "I'm glad Alfredo is your father. I admire him. But it makes no difference to us, one way or the other. We love each other and we're going to be married."

"My mother will never permit it," she said, trembling in his arms.

For three weeks they continued to see each other. Frank's work in those days was only a meaningless vacuum to be lived through between his meetings with Lucia, and her fleeting visits seemed to him a life apart, the only life that mattered. These were happy days—for a time. But all too soon he realized, with an overwhelming sense of frustration, that their meetings

were bringing them no nearer to a solution of their problems.

He and Lucia were deciding nothing. He might be wearing down her superstitious belief in the punishment by constantly belittling it, but her mother's attitude constituted a more immediate threat.

"Never," Lucia said again and again, "never will she permit our marriage."

Then I was forced to tell him one day that this phase of our work was nearly finished. We should be ready to leave before the week was out.

When he went to the temple at noon, Lucia was not there. He waited two hours and she did not come. This was on Tuesday. The day set for the expedition's departure was Friday. Our treasures had been cleaned and packed as they were discovered; we had only to break camp, collect our personal things together, and go.

On Wednesday he waited at the temple for three hours. On Thursday he went there an hour early and paced the gloomy chambers in desperation until late afternoon. The only footsteps he heard were his own.

He came to me. "Let me go to the village," he begged. "It is my only chance."

I hesitated. "If the girl has been forbidden to see you, and the people know it, there may be trouble if you go."

But I knew he would go, whether I gave my permission or not. "Do what you must," I said finally. "I would not stop you if I could."

As darkness fell he halted there in the Street of Punishment and knocked on her door, with fear in him like a sickness—fear that she might be ill, that some harm had come to her, that he might lose her. He had to knock again and again before the door swung open. Her mother stood before him like a stone statue barring the entrance to some forbidden temple.

"You are not welcome here."

"I must see Lucia."

"She does not wish it."

"Let her tell me so."

"Very well." She stepped aside. "She will tell you." And Frank stumbled after her down the tiled corridor into the sitting-room by the patio, where the scent of flowers was like a mist of perfume.

Lucia rose from a chair to face him, pale as the flowers, wearing a severe black dress that made her pallor all the more startling. Her hands went out to him, but fell before he could touch them. She retreated before his advance, shaking her head.

"No," she whispered. "No, Frank. My mother is right."

"Some things cannot be," her mother said. Was there a note of sadness in her voice, a note of pity, or did Frank only imagine it? "Some things are forbidden."

"We know that!" He flung his challenge at the mother, knowing he could change Lucia's mind if given a chance. "We don't care, either of us!"

"'We,' senor? You will be held to account if the law is defied. You, alone. Always it is the man."

"I'll take the risk." Frank pushed past her and caught Lucia's hands. "Come away with me, Lucia. We're leaving in the morning. You can stay in the camp tonight and tomorrow at Falaz we'll be married—"

"Falaz!" She shuddered.

It was at Falaz that the husband of another Hoyo Hondo girl had been shot to death.

"No, no!" She shook her head and pulled away from him. "I cannot do it!"

"Then you don't love me?"

"I did not say that. But I cannot marry you, ever."

"Then you are a fool, my child," said a voice from the doorway. "An even greater fool than your mother, who has paid for her mistake with a lifetime of misery."

Frank swung round to face Mrs. Fenton as she limped slowly into the room. All of them faced her, and except for the tapping of her cane there was silence.

She glanced at Frank in passing, but said nothing and went straight to Lucia's mother.

"Is it not enough that you have ruined your own life?" Mrs. Fenton said. "Must you force the child to repeat your mistake?"

Lucia's mother drew herself up to her full height.

"I have told her only the truth."

"The truth! The truth!" Mrs. Fenton's voice cracked like a whip. "What is the truth! The happiness I knew for a year with my husband, or the misery you have endured for a lifetime because you were afraid?"

"If she marries this man—"

"He may die. Very well. My husband died, but if the clock was turned back, I would risk it again, and so would he. You were afraid. You could have married for love, too—that young soldier who hid himself here during the revolution—but you sent him away and became the wife of Alfredo Cambas instead, and then lost Alfredo because you did not love him and he knew it."

Mrs. Fenton stepped back, impaling the younger woman with

her eyes. "Where is your young soldier now? Alive? Dead?

"You do not even know. At least I know what has happened to the man I loved, and that he was mine and no other's."

The silence came back and there was a sound of weeping in it. Lucia's mother had lowered her face into her hands. Lucia went to her, putting her arms about her.

The grandmother turned to Frank. "Are you afraid of dying?" she asked quietly.

He shook his head. "No."

"No, because you are like my husband—so much like him that you frighten me. Take the girl with you," she said. "Take her now. And God go with you both."

We left the following morning, and they were married in the capital two days later. No man could have been happier than Frank Miller when, with an arm around his radiant bride, he told me he planned to stay in San Nicolas a few weeks to undertake some research.

"Don't worry," he said, laughing at the expression on my face. "I won't take a job at the museum."

A month passed before I saw him again. I was in my office one bitterly cold morning, the streets glazed with ice outside, when my secretary announced him. He came in with a briefcase clutched in one big hand, a smile on his lips, and his boyish face well coppered by the San Nicolas sun.

"I thought you'd like to look at my findings, sir." He and his wife had just arrived in the city and were staying at a hotel, he explained. They would be leaving in a few days on a visit to his family.

We talked for an hour—or he did. About his wife, of course, and how wonderful she was. When he left, I watched him go through the outer office; then I shut the door, took up his notes, and began to read them. Pacing the floor as I read, I was by the window when he left the building.

I saw him halt on the pavement to wait for a break in the traffic, then step briskly off the kerb. At the same moment I saw the cab, and my mouth opened in a silent scream.

The cab hurtled straight at him, a juggernaut of gleaming chrome and bright yellow, out of control on the icy street. My eyes closed to blot out the sight and my hands clutched the window sill, letting his notes flutter to the floor. The squeal of the brakes was a nightmare sound that reached me, it seemed, all the way from Hoyo Hondo. Then silence.

I forced my eyes open. Directly in front of me the cab stood

at the kerb and Frank unharmed, was opening the door. His wife stepped out and embraced him, quite oblivious of the gaping driver. She must have screamed at the driver to stop when she saw Frank on the pavement, for he was scratching his head as though women would ever be a puzzle to him.

I looked at the girl and sighed. Frank was a lucky man, I decided—would be one of the world's luckiest men no matter what happened.

I've never been afraid for him since.

While Hugh B. Cave was working on his latest book, The Cross on the Drum, *he and his wife attended a week-long series of voodoo rites in the backwoods of Haiti, a gathering of all the houngans and mambos of the Dahomey clan which no other outsiders have ever witnessed. He is now preparing for another eight-month visit to the West Indies, principally Jamaica and Haiti, in connection with a new novel on which he is working at present.*

★ ★ ★

ANSWERS to CYGNET RING on page 35

1. *Cob, pen, cygnet.*
2. *No.*
3. *a. Tchaikovsky; b. Edmund Crispin; c. R. M. Saunders; d. Sibelius.*
4. *Anna Pavlova.*
5. *Shakespeare; Virgil; Anna Seward.*
6. *Lohengrin.*
7. *Leda.*
8. *Men who mark the Thames swans with nicks on their beaks to show which are Royal (five nicks) and which belong to the Dyers' and Vintners' Companies (two nicks). They wear black and white stripes.*

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across.
1, *Shrove Tuesday.* 10, *Recount.* 11, *Fertile.* 12, *None.* 13, *Arson.* 14, *Dear.* 17, *Cryptic.* 18, *Kenneth.* 19, *Nominal.* 22, *Stephen.* 24, *Erne.* 25, *Inner.* 26, *Asti.* 29, *Combine.* 30, *Initial.* 31, *Insignificant.*

Down.
2, *Hackney.* 3, *Onus.* 4, *Enteric.* 5, *Unfrock.* 6, *Sirs.* 7, *Abilene.* 8, *Transcendency.* 9, *Reprehensible.* 15, *Stone.* 16, *Onset.* 20, *Manxman.* 21, *Lantern.* 22, *Sheriff.* 23, *Hessian.* 27, *Mimi.* 28, *Zinc.*

HEART OF OAK

" If you don't speak,
I shall not hesitate to shoot," she said

BY CHRISTOPHER LANDON

IT was a good business, the smuggling along the Sussex coast. The schooners coming in from Amsterdam and Boulogne laden with their tea and Hollands gin in Bellarmine bottles; the pack trains waiting on the beach in Winchelsea Bay. All stable gates and doors left open for the return of borrowed horses.

All went well, from the beach, through the valleys of the weald to The Red Lion, Brede, when *La Belle Hélène* was inshore until the night that she was caught in a south-easterly gale.

She went aground and started to break up. The smugglers were so eager to beat one enemy, the waves, that they forgot the other, the Revenue. There was a fight; not a good-natured fight, for the Hawkhurst Gang was there. Those that got away returned home with bloody heads and fearful minds—and no booty.

All except John Baxter. He, prudent man, managed to salvage one case of tea, while the Hawkhurst boys and the Preventive were breaking each other's heads. He then rode at a gallop through the wind and rain to the doctor's house, leaving the tea in a secret cupboard in the chimney-place and the doctor's mare in his stable, being advised in a whispered consultation with the doctor himself, night-shirted by candlelight, to go to bed for two days with the " screws."

Baxter did as he was told. He was not surprised when the Preventive ransacked his cottage, departing with dark hints of further probing. The best form of defence being attack, he rose from his bed next day and rode down to the beach, where *La Belle Hélène* lay on her side already stripped to her ribs, like the skeleton of some prehistoric animal. The Customs' flag was flying over the hulk, and the Preventive Officers were patrolling.

The Senior Officer looked at him without affection. " Go home, John Baxter. There's no cheap pickings for you here. All that you didn't get two nights ago is safe ashore in the Customs House."

John Baxter did not appear to have heard. He stared at the

Senior Officer, and abruptly jerked his thumb towards the gaunt wreck. "I want to buy her. I want to build myself a house."

A few guineas, produced from a leather bag, glittered as he tossed them up and down.

The Revenue man was there to spot any inhabitant who tried to uncover something he had taken from the wreck. There was no interest in the disposal of the wreck. The high tides and gales that could be expected in the next few days would settle that problem.

A few gold coins changed hands, and John Baxter was told that *La Belle Hélène* was his.

He came back, as soon as he could, with hired help from the village. Between tides, they made short work of what the sea had started for them, ripping out the stem, the keel, and the best of the ribs. With a team of twelve oxen and a great cart, he took them to the high ridge at Chitcombe, and from them he made the framework of the house that he built there, and lived in until he died.

There were many changes in the place in the next two hundred years: it was divided into two dwellings, then became one again, the clay and straw that had been the first walls were changed to lath and plaster, then covered over with weatherboarding. The gentry took over in turn: a painter, a mad poet, then someone retired from the City. Each left his mark: brick floors were covered with new boards, doorways blocked up or altered to make way for unheard-of luxuries such as bathrooms.

Only two things remained unaltered. Whatever fancy name appeared on the plate on the new wrought-iron gates, the villagers, watching, waiting for the next coming and going, still called the house BAXTER'S. And unaltered, too, the frame of the place, the great timbers of *La Belle Hélène* that had held it together through the gales and blizzards of two centuries, darkened now by smoke, wormed in places, looking rotten on the surface, but hard in the core, hard as iron. "As hard," said one old craftsman, who came to cut out a beam to make a new doorway, "as a beggar-boy's heart."

When Miss Hardcastle bought the house, after the war, the village watched, and waited to see if she would last the probation period of five years as a foreigner. She did that—and more.

She won their approval in the first six months by taking down the name-plate that had proclaimed for two years, GREEN LAWNS, and replacing it with a simple printed board saying BAXTER'S.

They debated in the public bar the fact that she had a lot of money and, more important, whether it was true that she kept a

loaded twenty-bore shotgun under her bed. It seemed difficult to believe the last, for the old girl was badly affected with arthritis, and unlikely to be able to use it; but the matter was proved beyond doubt after one of these discussions. For a bet, young Art Shaw, after a couple of pints too many, climbed over her wall on the way home from the pub on a Saturday night to throw stones at her window. He was peppered badly in the legs by both barrels fired with extreme accuracy.

The matter was patched up, however, without resort to the police—on one side, an apology, and on the other, a five-pound note for Art for the time he was off work. The village relaxed, approving. Miss Hardcastle was accepted.

There was one thing they did not like, though—that nephew of hers who came to stay for weekends in the summer, the one who used to come down to the pub, and talk too loudly, and buy too many pints. They drank them, they touched their caps . . . but they spat into the grate when the door had closed behind him. They thought he was not doing his aunt any good.

And they were right.

It was a cool, almost nippy, April evening. Miss Hardcastle had lit the fire in the sitting-room. She sat very upright in her high-backed chair, the soft light of the lamp flowing on to the vivid colours of the embroidery she held in her lap.

Her nephew threw down the magazine he had been reading, got up, and stood in front of the fire. Now, he knew, was the time to broach the matter. The only question was, should he give her the present before or afterwards? As a sweetener, or thanks?

"Colin, you're in my light. And don't fidget!" The old lady carefully threaded another needle.

"Sorry, Aunt. I don't seem able to settle tonight."

There was no question about it now. The present would have to come first, the sweetener for the inevitable, unpleasant discussion that must follow.

"I wondered, if you have a moment—would you like to look at something? It's a little present I've brought you . . . something I picked up in the Caledonian Market last week. I thought it would be just right for lighting that dark corner on the stairs. You know, you worry me, Aunt. With that bad hip of yours, you could easily fall, and have a nasty injury."

"That's very kind of you, Colin."

Miss Hardcastle folded her work carefully and put it back in the basket. "You fetch your present, and we can see how it will look. Then we can talk."

He didn't like that last sentence, but there was nothing he could

do about it. He went up to the spare bedroom and collected his gift.

"You see, Aunt—" he stood on the narrow, twisting stairs, unfolding the chains from the hanging bowl of copper, a long-discarded sanctuary light—"it has a bulb-holder fitted, and is wired for electricity. We can shorten the chain to hang at whatever height you like. Parsons from the village will be able to wire it up to the switch at the bottom of the stairs."

The old lady, leaning on her stick, peered into the shadows of the roof.

"What are you going to hang it from, Colin?"

"Why, that old beam, of course. With a screw-hook."

"You won't," she grunted. "You'll never get it in. Do you know what Parsons said about that very beam when he was doing the wiring upstairs? 'As hard as a beggar-boy's heart.'"

"Oh, he only says that because he is so slow, to charge you extra time. Let me get the steps and try."

She waited, grim and silent, while he fetched them; watched as he measured the chain only to find it was six links too long for a good head clearance, watched as he poked at the beam with the point of his penknife.

"It's quite soft on the outside—almost rotten. It won't take a minute to do."

Miss Hardcastle grunted. "All right, you can do it in the morning. I don't want you fiddling round up there all the night. *Put those steps away, and come and talk to me.*"

Colin did as he was told, leaving the lamp at the corner of the stairs, in the alcove that was formed from a blocked-up doorway.

When he returned to the sitting-room, the old lady had started work on her embroidery again. "A very handsome present, Colin. It must have cost quite a bit. But I was taught a long time ago to beware of the Greeks who bring gifts.

"What is it that you want?"

It had come as quickly and brutally as this. He should have asked first, given it afterwards. No, that might have been worse. He stood in front of the fire, licking his lips, wondering how to play it . . .

"Can I have a drink, Aunt?"

"If you wish. But it's the third you've had since dinner." She did not look up from her work.

With his glass in his hand, he stood waiting.

"Well?"

"I wondered . . . *if you could lend me . . . a little money,* Aunt."

"How much?" Still she did not look at him.

"About five hundred."

Very carefully, she folded the work and put it away. "Five hundred pounds is a great deal of money, Colin. What do you want it for?"

It had to come out now. "I was a fool . . . I went to one of those roulette parties in town. I lost all that, and they'll only give me till Tuesday to pay."

"And that is everything?"

"Well, not quite—" It was going far better than he had dared hope—"I owe my tailor a bit, and there are a few drink chits at the club. Six hundred would cover the lot."

She got up slowly, and limped over to the small writing-desk without a word. When she had made out a cheque and blotted it, she handed it over her shoulder without turning her head.

"But, Aunt, this is for a thousand! It's most terribly generous of you but, really, I don't think I—"

"Not generous, Colin . . . but wise." She swung round to face him. "You see, it is the final cheque—the last money you will ever get out of me. You have sponged enough. Now, I know exactly what you are thinking, that you've only to wait a few years and you'll get the lot, as I once told you. But not any more, Colin. I'm going into Hastings tomorrow to alter my will. That cheque is all you will ever have."

"But, Aunt—"

"You can stay the night. But be away after breakfast to-morrow. And never write, or try to see me again."

"If you feel like that," he said furiously, "I'd rather go now."

"As you wish. Latch the front door when you go out. I'm off to bed." She limped towards the door.

"Good night, Aunt."

She turned for a moment to stare at him. "Good-bye, Colin."

He heard the uneven tread of her feet moving up the stairs.

All the time he was packing his bag, rage surged up inside him, not only against her, but against himself. To angle for a few hundred and lose about eighty thousand—she must be worth all that. And now he had that damned cheque in his pocket, there was no way out.

But was there? As he humped his bag along the landing, he saw the crack of light shining from under his aunt's bedroom door. He knocked deferentially.

"Yes?" There was no expression of any kind in the voice.

"I'm sorry, Aunt. I'd much rather you took the cheque back. I'll raise the money somehow to pay off this lot, and I won't do it again."

"I'm sorry too, Colin. But I've made my decision. Good night."

There was the click of a switch and the light went out—final as the fall of the guillotine knife. He went on down the stairs, past the alcove, and glancing back he saw, reflected in the gleaming polish of the dark woodwork, the glow of the lamp and chain.

That was the answer.

He let himself out very loudly, with a slam of the door that concealed the fact that he had let the latch stay up. The sound of his car driving away from the little lane at the side of the house should seem convincing.

He gave a quick look as he passed the front: there were no lights showing. He drove for a mile on the road to London before pulling to the verge. In the cool darkness of the spring night, puffing on a cigarette, he decided how it had to be done.

First, an alibi. That was easy. He got out, opened the bonnet, and found the high-tension lead to the coil.

Steadily, gently, he worked the wire to and fro until all the strands had broken close to the coil terminal. It was a common fault that could be caused by engine vibration and might happen any time. So late at night, and so near his aunt's home, what more natural than to abandon the car until daylight and walk back to ask for a bed?

He left his case in the car and walked in the middle of the road, quite openly, almost wishing to be seen; but there was no one, no sound but the barking of a dog far off at the crossroads. He slipped along the last ten yards in the deep shadow of the ditch by the hedge, and then tiptoed through the front gate and up the path.

He eased open the unlatched door.

The house was very quiet, very dark. This did not worry him, for he knew his way so well. He crept quickly across the soft, deep pile of the hall carpet, and turned up the narrow stairs to pick up the lamp and chain from the alcove, pausing for a moment to wrap the chain round his hand, leaving only a short length free to the heavy, swinging globe.

He drew back into the shadows of the alcove.

Now to wake her up.

There was a copper jug in the corner on a shelf above his head; he reached for it and threw it down the last flight.

To him, it seemed to make a noise like thunder in the narrow space, but when it had finished bouncing and had rolled into a corner of the hall, the silence came back deeper than ever.

For a few long seconds he was afraid it had not worked.

Then, on the wall high above him, a band of light appeared . . . the reflection of the light under his aunt's door.

He held his breath and waited, tightening his grip on the chain. The band widened as the door swung open, and then he could see her, faint, ghost-like in her long white nightdress.

But he saw something else that made him draw back close to the wall—the gleam on the barrel of the twenty-bore shotgun tucked under one arm. He knew it was loaded, and he knew she could use it.

"*Who is there?*"

There was no fright in the tone. It was scarcely a question, but rather an order to appear.

Silence . . . and she started to come down the stairs, one arm leaning heavily on the banister, the other holding the gun quite straight and steady. Was this the moment? She *had* to get past him to reach the light switch for the hall and stairs. In turning the corner the gun would swing away.

"I know there is someone down there, and if you don't speak, I shall not hesitate to shoot." Again, it was calm and precise.

Silence, then the soft, uneven sound of her feet as she hobbled down towards him. One, two, three, four steps. She was level with him now, just beginning to make the turn, close enough to touch him.

He gritted his teeth and swung the chain in a horizontal arc—hard, but not too hard. There must only be a slight mark, as if she had fallen against the lamp as it hung from the hook. The real fall would do the rest.

It connected all right, with a sharp, brittle crack. She seemed to hang poised for a moment, before plunging head first down the last flight of stairs with the gun underneath her. She must have had it cocked, with her finger on the trigger for, as she rolled over, it went off with a deafening report.

He stood quite still, stunned for a moment by the noise, the acrid smell of burnt powder drifting up towards him through the darkness.

At last he managed to unwind the chain from his hand and put the lamp down. Two steps, and he had switched on the hall light; a quick look at the huddled shape at the bottom of the stairs left no doubt that she had a broken neck.

But that gun? Damn it! Someone might have heard, and that would rob him of what he needed most—time. Don't panic. Do things as you planned them, but first things first.

You must screw that hook into the beam, with the lamp hanging at the full length of the chain. Fingerprints won't matter—you put it up, anyway, just before you left.

Then, out of the front door, dropping the latch. Batter at it to try to get in, run for help—or wait until someone comes to find this terrible accident. Hurry—you must work fast.

He ran through to the kitchen, fetched the steps, and placed them under the beam—the wormed grey-brown beam that had once been part of the keel of *La Belle Hélène.*

Sitting on the top of the steps, peering up, he tried to concentrate on the best place to put in the hook—anything but look down at that untidy white bundle at the bottom of the stairs.

He gave the screw-hook a couple of turns, and it bit; two more—and there was a sudden stop, almost a jerk to his finger and thumb.

Cursing, he climbed down, and walked past something he dared not look at, in search of the poker from the hall grate. Slipping it through the hook, heaving on it, there was relief when it started to turn.

But it was not what he wanted. The screw had not moved a quarter-turn, for the hook had sheared right off it, and fallen with a soft sound at the bottom of the stairs. He must have put it in directly on top of a hidden nail.

He tried again just beside the place, and the same thing happened.

He tried a third time . . . the same. Scrabbling hysterically, he tried again. It was impossible to have hit iron three times running.

A wind was rising outside, and as he sat there, so close to that old beam, he could hear the faint creak and whisper from it—the echo of his aunt's voice: *As hard as a beggar-boy's heart . . . as hard as a beggar-boy's heart.*

It was no metal that he had struck, but the solid core of the oak, toughened to something harder than iron by the centuries. He knew it, but he had to get a screw in, he *had* to. He must hide the damning evidence of the unhung lamp on the floor below. As the last screw broke, time did not exist for him any more.

He was still sitting there, whimpering, with bleeding fingers, when the village constable—summoned by a worried neighbour who had heard the shot—walked in at the door there had been no time to lock.

© Christopher Landon 1958

★ *Great News! The film of "Ice Cold in Alex," Christopher Landon's desert epic of three men, a girl, and Katy the ambulance, which you first read in Argosy, has been awarded the International Critics' Award for the best film shown at the Berlin Film Festival, 1958.*

ARGOSY

presents the first Patrick Petrella novel

BLOOD ON THE SCALES

by MICHAEL GILBERT

★

This enthralling hunt for a killer begins in next month's ARGOSY on sale September 10

What's the news of the day,
Good neighbour, I pray?
They say the balloon
Is gone up to the moon.

Nursery Rhyme

Captive Balloon

Now take your mind back, Mrs. Green.
Where were you, please, at 8.15
On Saturday
The 6*th of May?*
Would it be Friday then, or June?
Who else went up in the balloon?
Why did he fall?
You can't recall?

A. P. HERBERT, *The Surprising Song of the King's Counsel*

Flighty

I have applied to every relation on earth to procure me an opportunity of going up in some of the balloons that are expected every day to be launched . . . I am but just sixteen, light and fit for sailing, and cannot therefore be set aside on account of my weight; nor will any gentleman, I presume, who may be my partner in an airy excursion, throw me out like a sandbag. I have, indeed, only one apprehension, lest I should, growing frisky, tip over; however I think a man may venture with me.

Letter in The Lady's Magazine, 1789

Air Mail

Oh! the balloon, the great balloon
It left Vauxhall one Monday at noon,
And everyone said we should hear of it soon
With news from Aleppo or Scanderoon.
But very soon after folks changed their tune:
" The netting had burst—the silk—the shalloon—
It had met with a trade-wind—a deuced monsoon—
It was blown out to sea—it was blown to the moon—
They ought to have put off their journey till June;
Sure none but a donkey, a goose, or baboon
Would go up in November in any balloon!"
But here's Mr. Hughes!—What says young Mr. Hughes?—
" Why I'm sorry to say we've not got any news
Since the letter they threw down in one of their shoes,
And my father and I are in terrible stews,
For so large a balloon is a sad thing to lose!"

THOMAS H. BARHAM, *The " Monstre " Balloon*

Gilt-Edged Lining

Evidently there is no keeping a good balloon down . . . In 1906 . . . Harry Harper, one of Northcliffe's men, set out in a balloon from the Battersea gas works bound for Russia. Everything about his trip has an Edwardian flavour. To start with he took fifty gold sovereigns in his pocket because he believed—and with good reason in those days—that they would be accepted in the most remote foreign post office and enable him to telegraph home to the capital of the world, London. Then they were forced down in wildest Essex with their sand ballast and their sovereigns scattering all over the place and the rustics watching with delighted amazement. It says much for those onlookers of half a century ago that Harper was able to report that he got almost all his money back. Alas! that the same cannot be said of all those who risk their cash on the supplanters of the balloon.

The Times 4th Leader, 28th August, 1957

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Elijah was a prophet who attended country fairs,
He advertised his business with a pair of dancing bears;
He held a sale of prophecies most every afternoon,
And went up in the evening in a painted fire balloon.

Anon

Tie up a Goat

BY GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

The bomb through the letter-box killed the postman, but the intended victim was genealogist Charles Dennim, living quietly with that intrepid horsewoman, his Aunt Georgina. Charles was none other than the heroic and distinguished Graf von Dennim, a refugee from Hitler, who had been trained as a British agent and "planted" as a Gestapo officer in Buchenwald.

Admiral Cunobel, retd., and Ian Parrow, Charles's wartime C.O., recalled to investigate the bomb incident, move Charles to a lonely cottage as decoy—a tied goat to attract the tiger! The cottage phone is cut, a dog poisoned: Charles stalks the tiger, glimpses his face, meets Parrow to report . . .

"I AM certain he was not in Buchenwald in my time," said Dennim. "I have never seen him in my life. I have a good description for the Admiral. Height, just under six feet. Eyes, brown. Marked black eyebrows. Nose, strong and regular. Weight, about twelve stone. Hair—so far as I could see it—dark and greying. Age, around forty-five, but muscular and athletic. Brown tweed suit of excellent cloth and a lighter brown cap. Purvis's description of him as a gentleman is right. If he isn't landed gentry, then he might have retired early from the bar or medicine. Nationality, on the face of it, British. But I have a hunch that he might not be.

"I don't know if he stayed on to watch me, but I think he must have done. I cut off into a field and sat down under an oak to read my book. At half past six I left the field by the far gate and came straight to Buckingham."

"Look here, Charles," Ian protested. "Don't you care whether you're alive or not?"

"Very much. But the Crown has asked me to find the murderer of one of its very humble servants. A postman."

"It's not the Crown. It's Cunobel."

"Admiral Cunobel didn't give me the chance to fight Hitler."

"My God, you've repaid that a thousand times over!"

"It's not a question of repayment, Ian. It's a state of allegiance."

"Oh, all right! We'll go and see what Cunobel says. It's nearly nine."

Admiral Cunobel had finished his sleep, if indeed he ever had it. He was sharing sandwiches with his driver and had a large, leather-covered flask on the seat beside him. A police sergeant was just walking away from the car.

"No luck yet," the Admiral reported. "It's a tall order you've handed us, my boy! Now what have you been up to?"

Dennim repeated his story, and Cunobel listened in silence until he came to the description of the tiger. "We'll pick him up with those details," he exclaimed. "Just you tell me who he is, and we and the German police together should be able to connect him with the murders of Sporn, Dickfuss, and Weber."

"The murder of ex-Gestapo officers from Buchenwald is evidently the work to which he has dedicated himself," said Dennim. "He has solid respectability, leisure, enough money, and I think we may assume—when we consider his unlamented victims—that he has good reason for revenge. The chances are that he was engaged in some sort of underground during the war—we may even have trained him ourselves."

Ian and the Admiral stared at him in the dimness of the car. What he had said, put that way, was so obviously right. The tiger was a more formidable figure than any unbalanced, bomb-posting lunatic who had so far escaped merely because his identity was unknown . . .

Next morning, after the Admiral had returned to his house at Chipping Marton, Dennim followed him to the village, and introduced himself as Georgina's nephew to the Reverend Matthew Gallon who had just come home from matins.

The Admiral's vicar—it was hard to think of him as the parish's vicar—had merry eyes. After five minutes' conversation with him, Dennim decided that he would never have been successful in the ruder life of commerce but that he would always have been the pet of his associates. Both qualities fitted him admirably for the Church. He appeared to be equally amused by Nur Jehan and Aunt Georgina. She had, he said, an excellent influence upon his daughter. His tone suggested that such an influence was needed.

Georgina was shelling peas in the kitchen. Nur Jehan was also in the kitchen—all fifteen hands of him, coloured much as a Siamese cat except that his magnificent tail was deep cream. He breathed down the back of Georgina's neck with heavy affection.

Georgina pushed his head aside, and formally kissed her nephew.

Nur Jehan took a hearty mouthful from the bowl of peas, and blew the rest on to the floor.

"I draw the line," said Georgina, "at that horse in the kitchen; we must have the back door latch replaced by a mortise lock."

"He is a pure Persian Arab," explained Matthew Gallon, "left to me by a parishioner who had been a vice-consul in Kerman. Alas, he only enjoyed his retirement for two years! Nur Jehan comes from the Kerman desert, and as a foal he was brought up in the family tent—which I believe is very usual. So when my parishioner arrived with him in England he had not the heart to keep him out of the house. I do not think he wished to. And Mariana and I did not like to change Nur Jehan's habits too suddenly. Poor fellow, he deeply felt the loss of his owner."

"He is completely undisciplined," Georgina said severely. "He gets out of the glebe meadow and terrifies village children."

Mariana Gallon appeared sulkily at the window. "Hullo," she said. "Who are you?"

Georgina pointedly and formally introduced her nephew.

"Do you know anything about horses?"

"I used to know a little, but it was very long ago."

"Pony Club?"

"Not exactly. Vienna."

"If you're anything like your aunt, you're the answer to a maiden's prayer."

"Being ridden," Georgina explained, "is one of the many duties, Charles, which Nur Jehan does not greatly enjoy. And he refuses, quite politely, to be ridden by a woman at all."

"He's an anti-feminist," said Mariana.

"Not off duty, I see," Dennim remarked, for Nur Jehan had put his head through the window trying to reach Mariana's ear.

Mariana was a handsomely-constructed girl in her middle twenties. A little care, without even the professional assistance of a beauty parlour, could easily have transformed the mouse-coloured hair and weatherbeaten skin into golden brown and an even tan.

"I suppose you do have a stable?" Dennim asked.

"Of course we do. But he'll only stay there at night. You try to lead him in and see what happens. If you're not doing anything, would you like to help me to clean it out?"

"They have such a very heavy wheelbarrow," Georgina explained, apologizing for the abruptness of the invitation, but evidently hoping that her nephew would accept.

"I will do my best," said Dennim heavily, "to introduce a little time and motion study."

"You'll be more private here in the saloon," the landlord of The Haunch of Mutton said. "If I can get hold of him, there's someone who might want to talk to you. And then again he might not."

He returned in a quarter of an hour with an earthy little man whose walk and manner suggested the farmhand.

"This is Jim Melton," said the landlord, setting down Mr. Melton's stiff whisky alongside Dennim's tankard. "You ring that bell on the table if you want anything."

Dennim offered a cigarette and kept the conversation going on the weather and the state of the hay crop until Jim Melton remarked aggressively, "Colonel Parrow 'as done a lot for me, see?"

"He has done a lot for me, too."

"Told me you was a friend of 'is, 'e did, what the police is keepin' an eye on."

Charles laughed. "You could put it that way," he agreed.

He perceived that he was again in touch with Ian's impromptu organization, which seemed in these very special circumstances to be more at home than Scotland Yard.

Jim Melton was carefully observing the stranger with sidelong glances which were no more impolite than those of a bird. "Trappin' was my business," he said, "before the rabbits was put an end to."

"Well, I suppose you can still find a bit of sport."

Jim Melton looked shocked, and then surrendered to the twinkle in the eyes which were summing him up. "I can," he admitted. "But I only tells yer that, mind, to give yer confidence. And I don't 'old with them dirty gangs from London what clears out all the pheasants in one night. I'm a reasonable man. One for the pot and one for my expenses."

Dennim rang the bell and refilled Mr. Melton's glass.

"'Eard of Fred Gorble?"

"No."

"Ah. Lives in a caravan on a bit of woodland of 'is own, other side of the river. And 'e ain't too careful what 'e buys, see? Tucked away snug, 'e is, with some old farm buildings and no proper road to 'em. I was up there Saturday night to tell 'im about a load of old iron 'e might 'ave a use for, when I sees a 'orse in the stable what I wasn't meant to see.

"'Tidy 'orse that,' I says. 'Not mine,' says 'e. 'You forget about that 'orse, Jim,' 'e says—'you ain't seen it 'ere.'

"Well, I thinks, that 'orse is a 'unter if ever I see one, but what's 'e doin' 'iding a 'unter in the flat season? And when I says goodbye to 'im I don't go 'ome but slips round the back of the wood, like. I watches 'im lookin' for me, 'alf-'earted, but 'e soon gives up 'is suspicions.

"Now, this is what I sees, and I wouldn't think nothing of it if the Colonel 'adn't told me to keep an eye open for strangers. Bloke comes along about 'alf past nine and goes into Gorble's from the back. Changes into boots and breeches and bowler 'at, and then goes off on the 'orse. Funny time for 'ackin', I thinks. And that's all I knows."

"How was he dressed?"

"Couldn't see in the dusk. But a big bloke 'e was, with a cap on 'is 'ead."

Dennim paid for another round of drinks, and then Mr. Melton

vanished through the kitchen door of the pub. It was evidently his habit to let no one know his business.

The pub telephone was in the passage outside the saloon and reasonably private. Dennim called Admiral Cunobel's office and identified himself. He recommended a check on every hotel within riding distance of Kingston Buzzard which could put up a man and a horse, and asked whether a rider had passed the police cordon on Saturday night . . .

Just before closing time the landlord called Dennim to The Haunch of Mutton's telephone. The telegram which was read over the phone summoned Dennim to London.

The Admiral was alone in the office-flat at Singleton Court when Dennim arrived next day, and obviously boiling over.

"There he was," exclaimed Cunobel, "black eyebrows and all! Hired his horse at Woburn. Gave a false name and address to the stable. Paid cash whenever necessary. And no more sign of him!

"He never used a car. We've traced some of his movements to and from London by train. And there he vanishes. For all I know he might share my lunch table at the club without his eyebrows. It's full of big, dark, clean-shaven men with gentlemanly manners, blast their souls! How did you find out about the horse?"

Dennim told him.

"It's too damned dangerous," Cunobel exclaimed. "I wish I'd never thought of this nerve-racking goat business."

"But I feel that your plan is justified, sir, and that I must go on. This man has no responsibility but revenge, and he doesn't care what life is in his way."

"I don't understand what keeps you ticking, Charles," said the Admiral. "God bless my soul, even as a mad young lieutenant I wouldn't have done it."

"Yes, you would. For the sake of the postman. Or for the dog, if you like, who might easily have been some hungry human being. For the sake of—well, not quite Hans Weber, but the futility of killing anyone so contemptible and passive. As you said at the beginning, how many other mistakes has the tiger made that we don't know about? For the sake of those, too."

"Dennim all through—protect everyone but yourself! So you think this is your duty, eh?"

"I'm damned if I do. But it's somebody's. And I am available."

"Very well, take Nur Jehan for a holiday!"

"What?"

"I thought of that," said Admiral Cunobel complacently, "as soon as I knew our friend was a horseman. It's better than goat for tiger; it's jam for wasp . . ."

It would work. Charles had no doubt of it. Sooner or later—but no later than the week which had begun—a big, dark man who looked like a genial landowner would be making discreet inquiries, perhaps by letter or private detective, perhaps staying himself

with some reputable friend in the country, about Chipping Marton, the Vicar, Georgina, and their visitors. He would hear at once of Nur Jehan. And how very possible that his destined victim, believing himself safe but bored with hiding in a dull Buckinghamshire village, should accept an offer to give Nur Jehan a little elementary training! The move was in character . . .

"Now do you suppose that it really matters if you stay a night or two at my house?" the Admiral asked.

"Yes."

"Very few people know what I do, boy. The tiger will never guess that your life is being deliberately risked to catch him."

"Perhaps not, sir. But he would never believe for a moment that you would entertain an ex-Gestapo officer under your roof. After all, he cannot know that I was an Allied agent posted to the Gestapo."

"Parrow tells me that you were offered the George Cross," the Admiral said.

"Yes. He was very annoyed with me when I would not accept it. But I had worn the uniform of the Gestapo. I expect you have heard of men and women who had been tortured, and afterwards felt a compulsion to wash themselves twenty times a day. Well, I experienced that. One does not defile a decoration."

The man with the Arab stallion showed himself again and again on the bare skyline above the plain of the Severn. The villages where he bought forage and supplies could give news of him, and the farmers from whom he asked permission to camp. Yet for four days there had been no sound to be imagined of those dedicated feet padding behind him, no other horseman glimpsed for an instant across the long ridges of the Cotswolds.

Dennim's evening routine was to camp early in woodland by one of the hidden Cotswold streams, and then, having picketed Nur Jehan, to watch the approaches from a tree or high ground. When he was sure that no one had reconnoitred his position before nightfall, he could sleep in peace.

Nur Jehan was amenable to any plan in which Dennim was involved.

Dennim longed for freedom to school this sensitive and lovely creature who was anxious as a boy on a football field to do the right thing if only someone would explain the game; but as a companion for an old goat which didn't much care for memories Nur Jehan was nothing but an embarrassment. It was difficult to give full attention to his own security while trying to make chocolate-and-cream playfulness understand the language of the legs. Nur Jehan, in action over open country, obeyed; but saw no reason why in quieter movement he should be prevented from eating what he chose and from such entertaining sports as trying—without the least success—to stamp with his forelegs on silly chickens.

He had to carry a light sleeping-bag and ground sheet as well as his blanket, and Dennim was careful to spare him uphill or on heavy

going. Nur Jehan made a reliable pack-horse. He followed to heel like a well-trained dog, occasionally amusing himself by butting his companion from behind when he least expected it.

The first indication that all was well with the Admiral's plan came soon after dawn on the uplands by Roel Gate. Riding down the hill to the desolate crossroads, Dennim saw a grey car, which he had to pass, drawn up by the side of the road. If he hesitated and changed direction he might show prematurely that he was on guard. Dismounting, he kept Nur Jehan between himself and the car until he could see its occupants.

They had every appearance of being a couple with the simplest of all motives for extending the night to breakfast time; but, as he passed, the girl held up her police card so that he could see it and stop or not as he chose. The action was smooth and inconspicuous.

"This must be a new sort of duty for you," Dennim said.

"Well, yes, sir—at this end of it. But I've been a decoy myself."

"I am glad to know I am in such experienced hands."

"Well, you'd be all right if this were a public park and we were a hundred yards behind," the detective answered. "Now, sir, we are on duty from four p.m. till dawn. We shall always be on the west side of your route. All we want from you is to let us know where you are camping. You will find us in different makes and colours of car, and we may both be in it or only one of us. If in doubt, look at the number. It will add up to twenty-three."

"Are you from Scotland Yard?"

"Not us! Gloucestershire Constabulary. And all they tell us is what we mayn't do. But we are your close support, Mr. Dennim, and there's a radio in the car."

Dennim rode on in the lighter mood that for these four days he had longed to reach. It had nothing to do with the protection which this responsible young couple was anxious to give. He was sure that they could give none; when the tiger charged, there would be no time to call in police. What he felt was quite unconnected with his task or with its risks. It was a sudden, late wedding to his adopted country.

The Gloucestershire Constabulary! Absurd—but it was as if Cotswold itself were interested in him, as if the great square tower of Gloucester Cathedral and the elusive silver streak of the Severn had come up from the blue haze of the vale where he had watched for them, and formally bowed to him in passing. He patted Nur Jehan. It was a far cry from Danube and Persian desert, but both of them were enjoying their home.

By midday he had come to the end of the high and wilder ground, and it was time to decide his destination.

Mariana had given him an address that was not far away. He rode over, and was welcomed effusively by a hearty woman who owned an immense and unproductive farm.

Dennim courteously listened to a flow of reminiscences larded with the names of horsewomen—there seemed to be few men—who had stayed at her house or camped in her lovely barn. The

lady was somewhat surprised that, at his age, he should prefer the barn and a sleeping-bag.

The empty barn stood among a windbreak of beeches. Grim and austere, he thought, rather than lovely. But it was dry, with the honey smell of centuries of Cotswold hay, and the site was perfect in good weather for horse and man. Spring water plashed into a trough. The silent turf stretched away for half a mile to the north and west.

The more he looked at the place, the more he felt that this might be the end. If he were not expecting any attack, he would be at the mercy of a quiet and quick approach. But since he was expecting it the tables were turned.

About four in the afternoon he was grooming Nur Jehan who had been taught to change from trot to canter with the off fore leading. The stallion was reproachful, for his mouth hurt—he was so unused to discipline that it would have hurt if he had been bitted with a velvet-covered willow twig—and Dennim was completely absorbed in rewarding him with all the sensual pleasure which currycomb and brush could give.

He looked up suddenly at the thuds of hoofs, remembering that the Mauser was under his coat ten good yards away, and observed with relief the arrival of Mariana. His welcome, which in any case would have been warm, sounded enthusiastic.

He wished she had chosen a time when he was less preoccupied, but he was touched that she should have taken the trouble to see how he and Nur Jehan were getting on—and paid them the compliment, too, of a smart yellow sweater and clean jodhpurs.

"Nur Jehan is looking very fit," she said, patting his neck. "Are you both camping here?"

Dennim answered that he was, for on her way back she might easily stop to chat to some big, dark man—with or without bushy eyebrows—who, like herself, had borrowed a horse from a friend. It was an intriguing thought that he was the type who would unhesitatingly be lent a good one.

"There is a stable of sorts in the barn. Shall we put your pony there?"

Mariana showed a tendency to settle down on a pile of hay. Dennim, on the excuse of attending to Nur Jehan, led her firmly back to the edge of the windbreak where the view was open.

"You are sure I am not in the way?" she asked.

"Of course not, Mariana. What makes you think that?"

"You look as if you were expecting someone . . . We have talked so much about you, Charles, since you left," she said, when he had settled down on the dry leaves by her side.

"I hope Aunt Georgina gave me a good character."

"I think you must annoy her sometimes. She told me—" Mariana imitated Georgina deliciously—"that my ability to find virtues in the opposite sex was quite astonishing."

"Good lord, what had you done to deserve that?"

"I said that you were the kindest man I had ever met."

"Thank you, my dear. But that is not me. It's merely that I am old enough to be your father."

"I was born in Chipping Marton, not Vienna, Charles. Was it very full of lovely girls?"

"I suppose it was. But I was pretty good at finding virtues in the opposite sex, too."

"And you weren't disappointed?"

"Frequently. What of it? It's difficult to tell if one really likes a painting without living with it on one's walls."

"Well, one ought to be able to. One ought to know."

"My dear child, that's nothing to be tragic about."

It was a very long time since Charles had found himself in a situation of this sort. Indeed he could not remember anything quite like it. There she was, hurling her sex at him and yet so essentially innocent; for even if she had been over-inclined to experiment with and reject the limited opportunities of Chipping Marton, they had had no effect on her. She still gave the impression of a girl of eighteen rather than a woman of twenty-five.

He was aware it might be extremely unwise to offer sympathy by placing a fatherly arm on her shoulders. But to continue to show so little warmth that she was jealous of Nur Jehan was unkind.

The result of his gesture was unexpected. A robust and horsy hug—that, at the worst, should have been the answer, not this pathetic clinging to him, this complete surrender, sobbing with happiness. It was impossible. Whatever he felt, chivalry absolutely forbade that this should go on any longer. The uncounted minutes should never have existed at all.

"What did I do?" she asked. "What have you remembered?"

"Mariana, I am twenty years older than you. That's all I remembered."

"I wish you hadn't. Could you possibly imagine that I am forty-five and you are twenty-five?"

"No, my sweet, I could not. But it isn't only years. I don't belong to you or to anyone. I have no right in all this."

"All what?" He pointed to the sweep of the turf, the grey walls, and a church tower rising above the trees in a distant valley, all delicate and unreal in the clear evening light.

"But it is yours. You have been through hell for us."

"Not exactly. Perhaps for—what all this means to Europe."

"Georgina was telling us. The risks you took on the frontiers, and the terrible year in the Gestapo and the rescue of the two women from Ravensbrück."

"Oh, was she? Everyone seems to want to go on remembering except me."

"Of course we do. She said you wouldn't even take the George Cross. It's just like you. All this giving to Georgina and me and Nur Jehan and duty. You never take. You never allow other people a chance. If you want all this and—and the sort of thing which is born and bred in it, there are so many of us who would, sort of, make you free of whatever you want."

"About Nur Jehan," he said, firmly changing the subject. "We all accept so much nonsense without thinking. Of course he can be ridden by a woman."

"Who has ridden him?" she asked indignantly.

"No one yet. But the cause is simple. Your legs aren't long enough."

"I think you're beastly. And you said just now . . ."

"I'm talking about Nur Jehan's tastes, not mine. Even Georgina's legs are too short. He has a very sensitive rib—from an old wound, probably. My heel goes behind and below it. Yours doesn't. A boy's wouldn't. But your father has long legs, and so, I expect, had his owner."

"And my sensitive spots? Have you found the time to analyse those, too?"

"Yours? You are so loving that you like to pretend you can't."

"I never had any love worth showing till now, Charles."

"Mariana, you are a child and quite shameless."

"Yes, my darling. But suppose that you or I died tonight, and all my life I thought, If only I had been shameless!"

It was after seven when Nur Jehan and the pony cantered along the top and down to the east. At the main road Mariana insisted that Nur Jehan's day had been long enough, and that he should not walk the six miles to Stow-on-the-Wold and back again.

Charles accepted the excuse, though he knew the stallion was not in the least tired. It was best that they should separate while her world was still all that it appeared to her to be. On the way down through cut woodland, where hazel and elder grew close to the path, he had once heard another horse. Not surprising, of course. But it reminded him that the future was very far from the present. Her passionate cry that he might die tonight, which had overwhelmed his self-discipline and exposed to both of them that his lonely need of her was just as great as her own, might very well be true.

"Tomorrow, early," she said. "I will come out."

"Tomorrow, dearest."

To avoid the close cover, he took Nur Jehan straight up the bare and easy slopes, and back towards the barn along high ground. The long fields were still bathed in light, and deserted as savannah in some half-developed continent.

Charles smiled with amusement at his own happiness, and at the idea that at forty-five he should be uncontrollably planning a new life. He supposed genealogy could be carried on as easily in the country as in a London suburb, and might even be combined with a bit of farming or forestry . . .

"Good evening, sir. That is a splendid animal."

Hearty, perfectly in keeping with his surroundings, the man rode out of a little covert of thorn on the edge of the escarpment. He appeared to have just passed through it; there was nothing to suggest that he had been waiting within it. A strong and casual

face, a bowler hat, faultless jacket, breeches, and boots. The bushy eyebrows were not there.

Ian had been right. It was not the only change in his appearance. The dark hair was pure white. He looked older, more distinguished, even more of a well-known and responsible citizen than in the police description. He was riding a chestnut mare, a Cotswold hunter of sixteen hands up to his weight and with powerful quarters.

Dennim's start disconcerted Nur Jehan. He collected the stallion and himself. "Good evening, sir," he replied.

He could have sworn the man sat on his County Council, ran the local agricultural show, and was a magistrate. The police would hesitate to do more than establish his identity. It was inconceivable that he should have slaughtered an innocent postman, murdered Sporn and Weber, and ingeniously kept Dickfuss praying three days for death before he allowed him to die.

"Are you going far?"

"Only a training ride," Dennim answered. It was essential not to declare that his objective was the lonely clump of trees on the horizon half a mile ahead. He was completely at the fellow's mercy. He had no chance of beating him to the draw, since the clumsy holster of the Mauser was under his left arm-pit. The only hope was to keep him off and lead him, without arousing any suspicion, suddenly down to the world of farms and villages.

"I know," said the other. "Of course we have all heard of you."

"You live here?" Dennim asked.

"No, I am just staying with friends."

The tiger's manners were pleasant and assured. Evidently he had not the least idea that he could be suspected. Would it be any use to tell him that if he killed he was doomed, that his identity would be at last established and all his murders probably brought home to him? Dennim thought not. It was quite possible that he would raise his bowler hat ironically, and vanish. The wait for death would begin all over again.

And could his identity be established so easily? Yes, if he was really staying with friends. But was he?

The horseman had come up on Dennim's right. They were riding now side by side. Imperceptibly the pace slowed, for Dennim could not allow him to drop behind. It was safe enough for the tiger to kill. No one had seen them together. The man could even discover his dead body with—what was it Ian had said? —every expression of horror. It would be the end of him if he did, but that he could not know.

Sit up, touch Nur Jehan with his heel, and bolt for it—that was the only way out. But the fellow was a horseman. He would spot at once that it was deliberate flight. And then no more would be heard of him till he chose to reappear.

"He is only half trained," Dennim said. "He was brought up as a pet."

"Yes, I have heard of that being done. It's quite disastrous. Is he excitable?"

"No. And your mare?"

The fellow was evasive. He did not know. That proved at any rate that the mare did not belong to him.

It must not be obvious. It must appear that Nur Jehan had taken him by surprise. Dennim sat loosely and continued to talk as if expecting nothing. He drove his left heel hard into the stallion's sore rib and prayed that he wouldn't be thrown.

Nur Jehan failed him. Instead of bucking or bolting, he snorted, shook his head, and continued to walk. It was clear that he liked the horse alongside him and was not going to be put off a promising acquaintanceship by carelessness on the part of his rider.

Dennim tried it again. Nur Jehan stopped dead, offended and puzzled. He did not particularly mind pressure which he knew to be accidental. What he objected to was deliberate use of a sore rib to give orders. But the friend on his back was sitting easily and not giving any orders. The circumstances were all wrong.

The dark rider also stopped. Unless they were to stay there all night, Dennim had to start first and allow the other to remain for a deadly second or two behind him. He played the inefficient horseman and sawed at Nur Jehan's mouth, who started to dance.

"Completely untrained!" he shouted angrily.

"Were you perhaps a little hard on his mouth?"

"Damn his mouth!"

"Patience, my dear sir," said his companion pleasantly. "Patience always leads to the result you want in the end."

The man had now started to ride with half his right hand stuffed carelessly into his outside coat pocket. He went ahead for a moment and crossed Dennim's path on the excuse of looking closely at some sheep which he pretended to admire. It was extremely difficult to avoid coming up on his right. Riding side by side in that position, a shot through the pocket and into the liver—or anywhere if the unseen weapon were of sufficient calibre to knock him off his horse—would be easy, and impossible to guard against.

The movement to the left was a little awkward, but Nur Jehan was on his best behaviour and did not have to be forced too obviously into position. They went on over the turf, sometimes walking, sometimes at a canter. Dennim was reminded of gymkhana or riding school—so long ago that he could not remember which—turning an obstinate pony among posts. A pleasant little gymkhana this was! Come up on your companion's right and you are dead. But he must not make it too obvious that he expects you to do so. Nor must you allow your movements to be so unnatural that he begins to suspect you are deliberately keeping to his left.

The icy sweat which had been dripping down Dennim's ribs and over his too-imaginative liver was under control. He was a trifle more confident. At least it was certain that the man was not a fast and reliable pistol shot. Otherwise he would have brought his hand up and across the saddle. Not so easy, perhaps—for at the appearance of the pistol the target would shy, and the horse between the target's legs would follow the movement of alarm

enough to throw off the aim. Dennim himself felt able to take that risk. He would have waited for horse and man to steady, and still been sure of killing even if the range had opened to five yards.

But this was splendid! The man was losing that patience of which he boasted.

"A wonderful spot for a gallop," he invited.

It was. And a wonderful excuse for coming up behind and on the left. Nur Jehan was most unlikely to hold off the challenge of that powerful mare. Yet there was nothing for it but to take the gamble, and hope for a chance to change direction down to the farms, down to human eyes.

Dennim had allowed Nur Jehan a few healthy gallops, but never before had he ridden him flat out. The Arab was off like a greyhound from a trap, a start with which the heavier horse could not compete at all. Low voice and knees communicated the rider's excitement.

After a hundred yards Dennim looked round. The mare was coming up on his left, and ten to twenty paces behind. How much of a start he had had he could not tell, but Nur Jehan seemed to be still holding his own. Three hundred yards. Four hundred yards. And now a low stone wall which meant that he must pull up. But away to the right were cottage chimneys, and safety.

Could Nur Jehan jump? What could he jump? At least he had managed to get over the gappy hedges of the glebe meadow. But if he hit a Cotswold wall it was the end of the pair of them. A pistol shot wouldn't be necessary. A stone, while he was lying on the ground, would do the job neatly.

He did not even dare to steady Nur Jehan. He made his intentions plain and sat still. Nur Jehan, wildly excited, took off a couple of yards too soon. There was only the faintest click as a hind shoe touched the stone, and he was away again in his stride.

Dennim swung off to the right into a wide grass track leading downhill between walls. There it would be impossible for the other to come up on his left. He looked over his shoulder in time to see his pursuer check the mare, jump compactly, and break into an easy canter as if waiting for Dennim to come back and join him.

Dennim pulled up Nur Jehan and also waited. He was safe. A farmer and a white-coated vet or inspector were examining some bullocks in the next field. The upper windows of the cottage which had shown only tall chimneys were in full view.

He leaned forward to pat Nur Jehan's neck and under cover of the movement extracted the Mauser from its awkward holster and tucked it inside his shirt with the barrel down the waistband of his breeches. It was very uncomfortable and prevented riding at any pace but a walk. He felt confident, however, that from now on if his companion drew any kind of lethal weapon he would have his arm in plaster for a fortnight.

As Dennim showed no sign of moving from where he was, the other horseman joined him. "A remarkable burst of speed for an Arab," he said genially. "I could not catch you."

"No doubt if we had started level . . ."

"I thought you were down at that wall. But, my dear sir, what a risk to take!"

"He was bolting," said Dennim. "He might have charged right into it." The other gave him a quick look in which there might have been a shade of suspicion.

"I have no curb, you see," Dennim explained. "He is not accustomed to it. But of course we shouldn't have allowed you to tempt us. Come down and have a drink with me."

"A very good idea."

They walked their horses down to the village below, of which the only evidence was a carpet of great tree-tops and the roof of a Jacobean manor. His companion chatted so easily and amicably that Dennim knew he would never have suspected him. It was the Lord's mercy that he had been able, hidden by a hedge, to take a long look at that pleasant face when it had been intent on nothing but revenge.

There might be a police car here to which he could signal, but he had little hope of it. That reliable couple of the Gloucestershire Constabulary was over on some lonely road to the west of the barn. There were other patrols out, but they would be well back. He was not supposed to be on this side of the hills at all.

The village street was fairly empty. It was a broad, curving road with perhaps twenty houses on one side, divided by the church, and thirty on the other, divided by the inn. All were of stone, and none —except the village school in false Gothic—was later than the eighteenth century. The low sun brought out the gold of the Cotswold masonry and stone tiles.

"They are the most beautiful villages in Europe," said the horseman.

"Yes, they are," Dennim answered.

He was astonished that his reply had not been in the least conventional. The Tyrol? Spain? Alsace? Would he have agreed unhesitatingly yesterday, or was this the influence of Mariana? He confirmed that the essential button of his shirt was undone. It would be disgraceful to die just when his eyes had become English.

A short lane led them round the back of the inn to the yard behind. There was a garage but no stable. They hitched their horses to the railings and went into the yard. The flagstones had been roughly diversified by a few rock plants and stone troughs. There was a rustic table with two iron chairs for any passing customers who preferred to drink in the open. The white-haired horseman went straight to the table.

"What will you take?" Dennim asked.

"It doesn't matter," answered the other, and then, as if conscious of the oddness of his reply, added with more enthusiasm, "whisky. Scotch, if you will be so good."

Dennim returned from the bar with a tray. Before approaching with both hands occupied, he carefully observed the position of the

other pair of hands. They were both on the table and looked a little unnatural. Could the tiger have guessed that his intended victim was suspicious? That jumping of the wall, that bearing to the right and safety had also, perhaps, seemed unnatural.

With the drinks on the table, Dennim pretended to drop his matches and stooped to pick them up. He raised his glass and drank half of it. The other merely raised the glass to his lips.

"I believe your name is von Dennim?" the horseman asked.

"Dennim. I have dropped the *von*."

"I can very well understand it. When you have finished your drink, would you be good enough to accompany me to the top of the hill again?"

"With pleasure. But why?"

"I will tell you why when we get there."

"If you lower your head," said Dennim, "to pick up, say, your handkerchief, you will observe that I also have you covered, that my legs are crossed, and that I am sitting sideways. From under the table you can only give me a painful wound. If I see the slightest sign of you raising that pistol above it, I will kill you. Is that clear?"

The horseman looked straight at him with a blaze of hatred. Very gradually it died away, and was replaced by an ironical detachment far more in keeping with the face.

"You know then what I have to say to you?"

"What you said to Sporn, Weber, and Dickfuss, I suppose. But the game is up."

"The game is not up, von Dennim. As you say—or did you say it—you dare not shoot first."

"If that is really an automatic you have in your hand, I should be justified in killing you now—and acquitted."

"Perhaps, von Dennim. Only perhaps. It is going to be very hard to connect me with any of the executions you mentioned. However frightened you are, I do not think you will shoot first."

"I am not particularly frightened," said Dennim coolly, and was astonished to find that it was true. "If this is stalemate, as you think it is, you may as well tell me what you have against me. You were never in Buchenwald."

"No," said the horseman, "I was not in Buchenwald."

"Then what?"

"My wife was in Buchenwald."

"You are wrong. There were no women."

"Except by—invitation."

"I still do not understand."

"Have you forgotten, von Dennim? Did it mean so little to you? Very well, I will remind you. I like each one of you to know why you are going to die. The officers used certain women from the camp at Ravensbrück for their amusement, did they not? You yourself fetched a little party of them, von Dennim."

It was perfectly true. He had, once, jumped at the opportunity of fetching such a party. It would be unbelievable if he spoke of his own daring, and explained that this was the very incident

which had won him his George Cross and made him refuse it.

It had been Major Sporn's idea to borrow occasionally these unfortunate creatures from Ravensbrück—common criminals for the most part, utterly demoralized, and only too glad of a break in their lives and a chance to drink themselves into a stupor. One evening Charles himself had gone to Ravensbrück, and into the busload he had slipped Catherine Dessayes and Olga Coronel. He did not know how Parrow had persuaded them to trust him.

Twelve women had left for Buchenwald, filthy, dishevelled, gaudily painted. But was it ten or twelve who arrived? Sporn, already drunk, didn't know, and didn't care. Charles, pretending also to be drunk, had juggled with the two extra and subtracted them. Forty-eight hours later Catherine Dessayes and Olga Coronel had been picked up at a secret landing-ground and were in hospital in London.

"Your wife could not have been among those women," he said.

"She was, von Dennim. She died soon afterwards. I know every week of her life since her arrest. The men who interrogated her were hanged as war criminals—all but one, whom I hanged myself."

"What did she look like?"

"She had long, dark hair," he said. "Her skin was very pale even in health." The corners of his thin, mobile mouth twitched twice. He glared across the table with eyes in which the obsession of blood-feud had long taken the place of sorrow.

Charles remembered. The hair had been cut short, but the transparency of the skin was unforgettable. The woman did not seem to know where she was or to care. When he escaped to the privacy of his room, she had been staring stupidly at Dickfuss's admiration. She was already dead, though physically in apparent good health. God knew how they had drugged and broken her before she was ever interned in Ravensbrück.

"What had she done?"

"Done? What had she done? You scum, does the name of Savarin mean anything to you?"

"Yes . . . Were you Savarin?"

"I was."

Presumably someone in France knew to whom that cover name had belonged. London never did nor, he believed, did the enemy. Incredibly astute and merciless, Savarin had carried on his own private war against the German occupiers. Every act of bloodshed and sabotage carried the stamp of his own temperament—a sardonic savagery.

What an appalling revenge the Gestapo had taken on her, breaking her soul and character before they ever flung her, contemptuously, into Ravensbrück. Dessayes and Coronel could never have known of her presence there since she was not interned among the politicals. If those two gallant women had suspected that the wife of Savarin was in the camp, let alone in the bus, one of them would have given up her place to her.

"Dickfuss and Sporn I can understand," Dennim said. "But why did you kill Hans Weber?"

"He went with you and drove the bus."

Accurate again. Charles had persuaded Weber to drive for the sake of his quite remarkable stupidity. If a total of ten were repeated to him often enough he could be trusted to swear to it.

The cruelty and pity of the thing! He could not kill Savarin in cold blood. Prevention was his duty, not punishment. To take revenge for acts of revenge was merely to extend the horror and call it justice. Perhaps it was his own duty to die. But then, Mariana? Yesterday, when his life belonged to no one but himself, it would have been a wildly Christian and honourable way out of the dilemma. But the future was no longer his own to relinquish.

"You must surrender, Savarin," he said. "This is the end. You will see it when I tell you what I know. You tried to poison me in my cottage. Do you understand now that if you force me to shoot, I can plead self-defence?"

Savarin's face hardly changed. It was as if he were listening to what he had already considered a possibility, but rejected. "My regret is that I should not be present at your trial. I know the English law. I am half English and was educated here. However much the police may try to shield you, von Dennim, my friends and relatives are influential enough to see that you are put on trial for murder. A von Dennim in the Gestapo! The head of your distinguished family should kill you, if I do not."

"I am the Graf von Dennim."

Savarin jerked forward his body, and spat in his face.

With a spasm of self-control, Charles sat still. He heard himself saying, "After that I have a right to know with whom I have to settle. Your identity need no longer remain secret."

"The Vicomte de Saint Sabas."

"Saint Sabas! You have a son, I believe?"

"I have."

"My conscience is easier."

"You are impertinent!"

"No, sir. I am aware that a St. Sabas was engaged in the Second Crusade. I did not wish to end the family or see it disgraced."

"Disgraced?"

"You murdered an innocent postman, St. Sabas."

"What the devil is a postman to you?"

His right arm began to move. Slightly quicker the barrel of the Mauser was on the table. Both weapons returned to the lap.

"A duty, St. Sabas. A duty, as if you were a tiger and had killed in my village. You make too many mistakes. Here is another!"

Dennim told him the story. It was fair that the man should be given a chance to believe, before being compelled to fight for his life. But the short facts seemed to make no impression on those impatient and contemptuous eyes.

"My reply to that is that you are a liar and a coward," he said. "Not even Dickfuss thought of claiming to be a British agent."

"To arrange conditions between a liar and a madman is a little difficult," Charles remarked, finishing his drink and disregarding the minor insult, "but I will make a suggestion."

He was aware of the suicidal folly of what he was about to propose. But it was the only way out. For St. Sabas, and for Mariana. He refused to shoot the man down in cold blood. And if he made the slightest move from that table towards the door to the bar and the telephone, St. Sabas would kill him.

"I give you no conditions."

"Then you may accept mine. You know the clump of trees and the barn on the way to which you proposed to assassinate me. We will ride towards it together, but out of shot. We will halt three hundred yards from it. I shall give you time to examine the barn thoroughly, since I know it and you do not. You will then retire to a distance of three hundred yards on the other side. We shall be in sight of each other and know if the terms are obeyed."

"How do I know that you will not ride off and hide in a police station?"

"How do I know, St. Sabas, that you will not vanish as you did from Kingston Buzzard? Savarin has had a lot of practice in changing his name and appearance."

"You know it because I intend to kill you. I am impatient, von Dennim." His voice rose a little above its usual cold tone. He was indeed impatient.

"And that is my motive, too."

"I will not accept."

"You are afraid, St. Sabas?"

"I am afraid you will run." This was getting beyond endurance. Dennim felt an appalling nervous desire to laugh.

"You spat in my face," he said. "Shall I put it this way for you? That even if a von Dennim is a Gestapo officer and a St. Sabas murders postmen, each has a tradition in spite of it."

St. Sabas looked at him with a shade less certainty, or at any rate with less intensity of hatred in his eyes. He was human again—the deliberate, highly-intelligent executioner rather than the madman controlled only by the fear that he might die before he could kill. "You are different from the rest," he said. "I will agree to your conditions."

Dennim stood up, and with his back to the windows of the inn slipped the Mauser into its holster. St. Sabas wavered. It was a .45 automatic in his hand. The Graf von Dennim's eyes held him contemptuously, while Charles Dennim disapproved in complete panic of this highly-dangerous theatre. St. Sabas put on the safety-catch and dropped the pistol into his outside pocket.

They walked, without a word, side by side to their horses. The atmosphere of formality which Dennim had created seemed to persist. There was nothing whatever by which the villagers, watching these two handsome, beautifully-mounted, middle-aged men could have guessed that they were not old friends who chose to be silent.

When they were alone and back on the green road which led to the hilltop, they separated, each keeping close to the wall on his own side with twenty yards of turf and ruts between them. Nur Jehan strongly objected.

"I think that there is no reason to fight your horse," said St. Sabas. "What little beauty there is in this world has already suffered enough from you. I will give you my word of honour that you may safely ride by my side, and I will accept yours."

"Thank you," Dennim answered, and added, "the light is going fast."

"It was too clear this evening. It looks like rain."

"Not before midnight, I should say."

"It has certainly been a remarkable June."

"Yes. We have been fortunate in our weather."

The hilltop was now bare and dismal under the overcast sky. There was just enough wind to sing faintly in the telephone wires which marched up the hill along with them and ended at the last house. The barn and the clump of trees were no longer sinister as they had been in sunlight. Set in the greater loneliness of the uplands, they now suggested shelter and a roof.

"I doubt if we shall be able to see each other at six hundred yards," Dennim said.

"I shall signal to you with a torch when I am in position."

"Mine, I fear, is in my rucksack at the barn."

"It works?"

"Very well."

"Take this, then. I will pick up yours when I examine the barn." St. Sabas handed over his torch, and with a slight inclination of the head rode forward to the clump of trees.

An excellent chance, Dennim thought too late, to tamper with his rucksack! He dismissed the suspicion as dishonourable.

The barn was now at the limit of vision. Dusk and the trees swallowed up St. Sabas.

Dennim dismounted and thought over his right tactics. What would St. Sabas do? Well, he would surely ride hard and straight for the trees, if he were allowed to reach them, and then lie up in cover like the tiger they had called him. That was the way to take advantage of his heavier .45 bullet. For himself, then, speed while the light lasted. On the other hand, the sooner he got rid of Nur Jehan, the better. The stallion could not be trusted at all in his present mood—except to graze and not go far away.

Dennim fitted the Mauser to its butt. The first shot was going to be at a hundred yards, and another should not be necessary.

He waited, and at last heard St. Sabas leave the trees and canter away. A minute later he saw the torch winking at him. He mounted Nur Jehan, answered, and galloped off to the right of the wood instead of directly for it. St. Sabas, as he expected, rode straight for cover. Dennim dropped to the ground, fired and grazed—for the shadowy figure raised a hand to his neck or ear—fired again and missed. Horse and man vanished into the trees.

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There was silence.

That was that. It was most unlikely that he would ever have another chance to use his longer range and greater accuracy unless St. Sabas were to be caught on the move in the open by the sudden appearance of the moon. It was up, showing very faintly through the drifting clouds and occasionally unobscured.

How far away would the shots be heard, and would anyone bother to tell the police? He thought it improbable. The nearest cottages were half a mile off and sheltered from direct sound by the contours of the hill. Even if the reports were carried sharply on the wind, they need not necessarily attract attention.

Nur Jehan was not grazing. He stayed close, but seemed to be thoroughly uneasy and restless. He had to be left to look after himself. There was nothing to which he could be tethered. At any rate—and that was a blessing—he was not in the affectionate mood to follow his rider about.

St. Sabas would by now have tied his mare to a tree and be waiting for the attack. But where? He should just be able to see Nur Jehan, still close to the point where Dennim had flung himself off and fired; he would not expect a straightforward attack from there. Very well, a single bluff. That would be the direction of the advance.

Dennim crawled cautiously along a slight fold in the ground which led obliquely to the clump of trees. Hardly visible as a depression at all, it was just enough to allow the nine-inch stems of grass to be a screen rather than a guide to his movements. Some fifteen yards from the edge of the trees he started to leave his cover, raised his head, and was fairly caught by the moon.

He lay still, hoping for the best but well aware that, once he had given away his position, the dark blotch of his body could be made out. St. Sabas's shot—a carefully aimed shot, to judge by the delay—plunged into the turf alongside his ribs. Dennim cried out, and rolled back into the fold of ground he had just left.

He himself knew very well the difference in sound between a bullet in turf and a bullet in flesh. But St. Sabas had never been a gamewarden. He probably didn't. There was a good chance that he would come up cautiously to administer the coup de grâce.

Silence went on and on. It seemed all of half an hour, but there could be no stirring even to look at a watch. At last he heard his opponent on the move.

Dennim took stock of the odds. He himself was the better shot and far the better at fieldcraft. On the other hand, though he had been under fire often enough, he had no experience of attack—and St. Sabas must have had as much battle experience as any infantryman. More indeed. But he still felt that if St. Sabas came up to look at his supposed corpse, the result was certain.

St. Sabas had mounted his mare. He heard the creak of leather, the jingle of the bit. Was he so convinced of the effect of his shot that he intended to ride off? Surely not. That didn't make sense. The one thing constant about St. Sabas was that he intended to

Careers in Electricity Supply

This is an extract from a recorded interview with Mr. Telford, who joined the Electricity Supply Industry as a Graduate Trainee.

"...you can have a go at whatever you want"

Mr Telford

***Question Master*. What was your first job in Electricity Supply after your training was finished?**

Mr. Telford: Well, I finished my graduate course in 1950 and was appointed Shift Charge Engineer at Frome, in Somerset — a small station but an excellent training ground. From there I went to Earley — a much bigger station of 120 megawatts — as Boiler House Shift Engineer; later I became Charge Engineer there, and for a while was Efficiency Engineer, as well.

***Q.M.*: Your next step was London, wasn't it?**

Tel.. Yes, I came to London as Second Assistant Engineer on the Divisional Staff, and later I was appointed Deputy Superintendent at Bankside Generating Station—the position which I hold now.

***Q.M.*. Bankside is a pretty big station, and at 36 you're young, aren't you, to be a Deputy Superintendent? But what made you come to London in the first place?**

Tel.. A chance came along to get some administrative experience at H.Q. level, and I thought I'd better take it.

***Q.M.*: Does the Industry give many opportunities like that?**

Tel.: It most certainly does. It gives you a complete opportunity to have a go at whatever you want, and what you think you're best equipped for. The man who wants to get on is helped in every possible way, I've attended several courses run by the Industry, not only on technical matters, but on subjects like personnel selection and industrial relations.

***Q.M.*. Now a word about newcomers to the industry. If you have a chap of ability who is prepared to get down to the task, what would you say his opportunities were like?**

Tel.: I would say that he has really splendid opportunities. For one thing, a career in the industry is established on a very firm footing — you could do without a lot of things, but it's impossible to get on nowadays without electrical energy.
Another point worth remembering is that a man coming into the industry has the choice of the entire country to work in, and there's no parochial approach.

We'd like to publish more of this interview but there isn't space. For details of the many careers in the Electricity Supply Industry and the salaried training schemes available, ask at your local Generating or Distribution Board's offices, or write direct to:

The Education and Training Officer,
The Electricity Council,
51 Winsley Street, London, W.1

carry out his vengeance. Then what the devil was he doing?

Man and horse came round the corner of the clump and charged him. There was no time to fire, and the target, a chest-shot at a horse which was already on him, was worthless. Trampled into the ground or shot on the ground—that seemed the only choice, but somehow he avoided both.

He writhed away and ran for the trees, jinking like a snipe. If St. Sabas had had a sabre, he could have cut him down three times over, but a .45 from a galloping horse was a weapon useless as his own. God alone knew where the shots went, they didn't hit.

The quarters were so close that Dennim once seized the martingale and used the mare herself for cover. She shied, and he was into the trees before her rider could regain control.

He reached the barn and lay on the hay, fighting for breath. To be at the receiving end of a cavalry charge was not a sport for the middle forties. Regaining at last his self-possession and a steadier hand, he came to the conclusion that honours were even. St. Sabas had found out, without the slightest risk to himself, that he was not dead. On the other hand, he now held the interior lines. The tiger would have to come in through the door and tackle him in the darkness of the barn.

Had St. Sabas got an extra magazine? On the whole, improbable. He must have ridden out that evening assuming that one or, at the most, two shots would do. How many had he fired in that burst? Was it four or five? Dennim was ashamed of not knowing, but it had seemed like a dozen. Only by counting now the reports in his memory could he have any idea. Say, four—plus the first shot from the trees. That left St. Sabas a maximum of three, against eight in the Mauser.

The grey of the doorway was suddenly blocked by a horse. What was St. Sabas up to now? But it was not his mare. The lighter colour showed even in darkness. It was Nur Jehan come in search of him and doing his pet dog stuff at the most awkward moment possible, for an innocent Judas caress would give away his exact position. The mare followed a moment after. Probably they were meant to distract his attention. They did.

Dennim began to be really frightened. He reminded himself that fear was healthy so long as it was not allowed to become panic; it would ensure that he did not underrate his opponent any more. St. Sabas had agreed to surrender to the motives and code of a very angry Graf von Dennim, but it was best to remember that he was also Hauptmann von Dennim and that he must not risk being wounded and helpless. St. Sabas could not have at his disposal the three days which he had spent on the punishment of Dickfuss, but no doubt he would gladly spare an hour.

There were two tall, open windows in the barn, each at about a man's height from the ground. They had to be watched as well as the doorway. If St. Sabas entered by either window he should be silhouetted against the lighter night sky.

The silence went on and on, broken only by the munching of the

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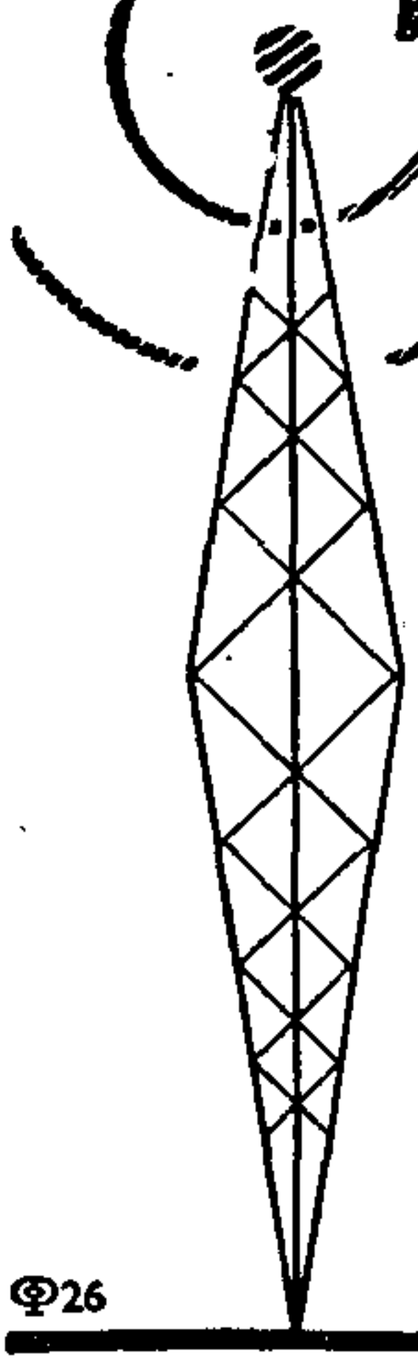

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horses, who had found something to their taste. At last he heard a scuffling on the stonework of the window to his left. It stopped. If St. Sabas were going to attack that way, there had to be a moment when head and shoulders were over the sill, and that would be his last. Dennim looked down at his hand. It was perfectly steady in spite of the uncontrollable beating of his heart.

The scuffle began again, only just detectable. Dennim cautiously moved back to gain an easier firing position. The hay rustled. A torch and a shot flashed, one as fast as the other. He fired back to right and left of the flash assuming that St. Sabas would have jumped aside. No apparent effect. Six in the Mauser against two in the Colt.

He did not think he had hit. Something had fallen heavily as he fired, but that would be the long pole or whatever St. Sabas had used for tickling the window sill. He had not been outside at all. He had driven in the horses and slipped through the door himself under cover of the blocks of heavy, moving darkness.

Dennim's one idea now was to get out. Interior lines be damned! He had lost all the advantage of fieldcraft and range, and it was late to attempt to regain them.

And then Nur Jehan screamed. It was utterly unnerving. A ghost or a mating vixen could have been no worse. Dennim jumped round to face the horses without any regard at all for cover. What on earth was wrong? St. Sabas would draw the line at getting under his belly with a knife. Why? Why?

It was not till the stallion's second scream that he realized what was happening. The mare plunged out through the door, Nur Jehan after her. So that was the cause of the restlessness. So that was what he needed to break the inhibiting link between himself and the kindly creatures who played with him—the scent of human fear. Well, he had had enough of that inexplicable, inflaming scent all the way up the hill and in the barn.

Dennim dropped to the ground, streaming sweat.

"A fine foal, von Dennim, I should think, wouldn't you?" The cool, ironical voice came from the far end of the barn. "Ah well, in the midst of death we are in life."

The man never missed a trick. Under cover of the excitement he had slipped out of Dennim's half of the barn and was now in the other.

Dennim did not reply. If St. Sabas were conversational, it meant that he wanted to know whether his shot had hit or not. And it was a good moment to choose. He must know very well by the state of his own nerves that Dennim's were also shattered.

"They'll be very pleased at Chipping Marton, especially the good woman you were saying good-bye to just before we met. The Vicar's daughter, I suppose? From what I hear, she is not at all like Nur Jehan. Even a Gestapo officer is better than nothing. Missed again, von Dennim!"

And what a fool to fire two shots at a voice certain to be behind cover! Four in the Mauser to two in the Colt now. Who was

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reducing an impetuous opponent? It might even be four to three. A man of Savarin's character could well have started with one in the breech as well as a full magazine.

There had been a box of cartridges in the rucksack—if he could ever get at it in the dark and without noise—but the box was most unlikely to be there still. St. Sabas would have seen it in looking for the torch. Perhaps he had had something of the sort in mind. The tiger was twice as cunning as the goat.

To escape to the trees, out to the trees at all costs—that was the only means of restoring equality. Good God, he had made rings round this famous Savarin in the fields of Kingston Buzzard!

More deception was needed. As likely as not, Savarin had fought for his life before in the pitch darkness of house or barn, though he probably had a tommy-gun and plenty of ammunition. What had to be established first was whether the man would risk firing at a promising sound. Dennim took refuge behind the remains of a chaff-cutter, deliberately rustled the hay where he had been lying, and showed a leisurely flash of his torch. No reply.

There were plenty of little sounds if one listened carefully—some of them rats, some the settling of rotten wood and mortar after the plunging of the horses, some made by St. Sabas. It was difficult for either of them to move quietly. St. Sabas was wearing heavy riding boots; he himself, ordinary boots and gaiters. Odd patches of chaff and old dung dried to powder muffled three or four steps, but the next crackled on noisier débris or struck stone.

He had the impression that St. Sabas had moved towards the doorway and was lying in the angle of wall and floor, waiting for him. The torch might be used to get him away from there.

Close to Dennim's hand were the remains of the stable door, hanging from one hinge and creaking in the slightest breath of wind. He lifted a truss of hay and balanced it on the door. On the truss he laid the torch and covered it with another. He switched on the light. No sign of it showed. Then he moved on hands and knees to his side of the entrance. The wind or even a heavy footstep should bring the whole lot down and give him a moment to get through the door while St. Sabas charged or shot at the light.

There they lay, separated from each other by twelve feet of lighter space into which neither dared venture while hoping that the other would. Dennim waited a quarter of an hour for his delicately-balanced bundle to collapse. Of course it didn't. No obliging rat. No puff of wind. Too damned ingenious!

With infinite precautions he discarded his gaiters, took off his boots, and hung them round his neck. He then started to circle the barn, keeping close to the far wall. His plan was to come up behind St. Sabas and fire, whether he could see him or not. Surprised, the man would assume that he was faintly visible and would swing round or dive into darkness leaving the door uncovered.

The circling of the barn tried patience hard. There were numerous scraps of barbed wire and old iron about, and each foot had to go down slowly, feeling for the floor. At last he struck the

wall in which the entrance was and followed it, stopping a few feet short of the point where he believed St. Sabas to be lying. Crouching low with knees bent and left hand on the ground, he fired into the darkness ahead.

St. Sabas cursed and seemed to leap towards the centre of the barn. The chance that he was now facing away from the door had to be taken. Dennim tiptoed out into the open.

So easy. So unhurried. Yes, because it had come off.

He sat down and put on his boots. It was nearly as dark outside as in the barn. The wind had dropped. A soft, straight drizzle was falling. The moon was obscured. No stars were showing except low down on the eastern horizon in the faint streak of the false dawn. One might be sure of killing at three paces.

The next move was obvious—to lie on the remains of an old dung heap close to the door and wait for St. Sabas to come out. That was as near certainty as one could get, if there were any certainty at all in dealing with this tiger of a man.

He wondered if loss of blood from the first shot was telling. There had been no time for any close inspection when St. Sabas charged him, and all he had seen was a dark handkerchief tucked into the collar. That last shot, too, might have scored. St. Sabas's exclamation seemed to carry more than surprise; but it might just as well have been anger as pain.

He waited. Several times he heard St. Sabas inside the barn. Once he seemed to rush, but there was no shot. Evidently he had lost patience, but was holding his fire till he was certain.

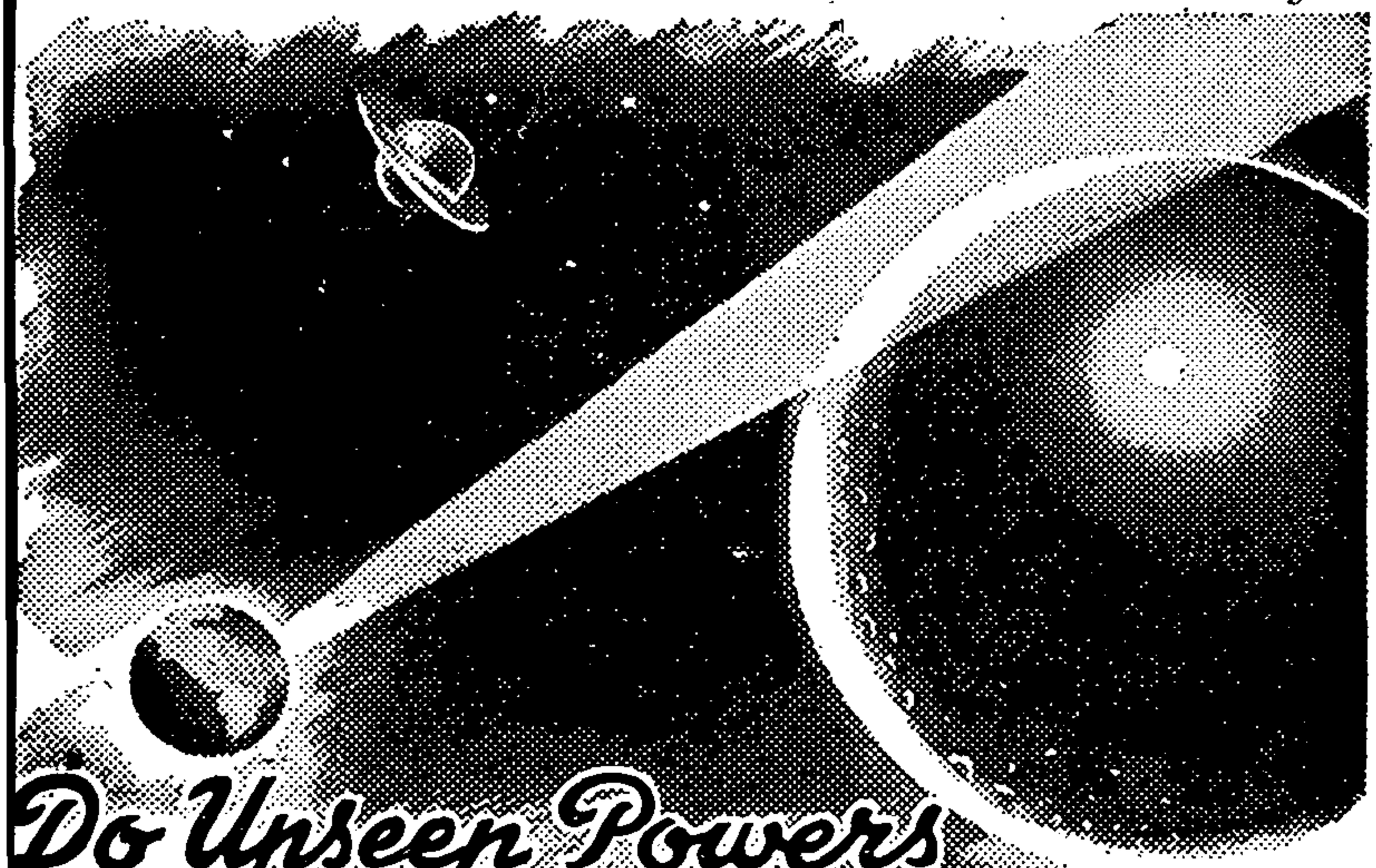
Then something metallic rolled across the floor. The torch, of course. That damned bundle of hay had at last collapsed when it was no use to anyone. There was no immediate reaction from St. Sabas. He was listening. The torch, falling without any sound or action to back it up, had given away the game. He must now suspect that Dennim was outside.

No doubt of it whatever. The man was going through the right-hand window without any precautions at all. Dennim jumped up and dashed round the corner of the barn, keeping close to the wall. He saw St. Sabas drop to the ground, dodge, and fire. The shot struck him in the forehead.

He had no time to wonder why he was not dead. He plunged into the darkness, staggering away to the trees, and twisting among them like a wounded animal. Vaguely he questioned why the wild desire for safety should be still able to move him when he had been shot through the brain.

A low, black thing loomed up in front of him. He dropped behind it, put his hand to his forehead, and collapsed.

It had not been for long, he thought, the period of unconsciousness. He knew that St. Sabas had not followed, so that something in him must have been listening. The something was correct. There was no sound of riding boots shuffling lightly over the leaves. He took his hand away from his forehead, and immediately



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blood covered his eyelids. Very delicately and still wondering, he dabbled in the mess. There was no hole in his skull.

Then what had happened? It seemed likely that in spite of hugging the wall St. Sabas had seen him clearly enough against the streak of eastern sky to fire. He had missed—must have missed—but the bullet had ricocheted off the stone of the barn and ploughed across his forehead.

Dennim tried to get the flap of scalp back into position and bind it up. He could not get his hands behind his head to tie a knot. Again he fainted.

When he drifted back to consciousness, the light was growing. A faint grey. Still a very faint grey, but one could see all the nearest trees as separate. He was lying behind a large fallen branch. St. Sabas could have found him easily.

But think it out! St. Sabas could not be quite sure what damage he had done. He might have seen his bullet strike the wall. In that case, he could believe his opponent was bluffing again, or had been temporarily blinded by chips of stone. And then—most important of all—the tiger had been hit once if not twice.

The light grew. St. Sabas could see the blood now—and he would certainly look. Little pools of it must be here and there. God, how a scalp bled! The blood trail—how often he had followed it in youth to put deer or wolf mercifully out of pain. Two remained in the Colt's magazine. One would do.

The blood trail. Was it possible to lay a false one? Had he the strength? It was grim pleasure at his own thought which gave it to him.

He raised his head a little and looked round. The patches of blood must point straight at that fallen branch, and it provided no cover at all for even half light. It was no place to stay.

There was a bit of broken wall farther on. That was a possible shelter for a poor old goat to die behind. There was also a promising little hollow which might once have taken the overflow of the spring. Now, what would St. Sabas do when he came on the matted blood behind the branch and found a trail leading to one or the other? Well, he would never walk or crawl straight on and ask for trouble. He would try to work his way round and take a look from the opposite side.

The hollow was difficult to outflank. The wall was not. There were two low bramble bushes on the edge of the clump of trees which commanded it. If St. Sabas had any eye for country he would pass outside the clump, re-enter it, and look over or between the brambles at what was behind the wall.

Dennim raised himself to hands and knees. He had to cover thirty flat and simple yards over a sparse carpet of last year's fallen leaves. He assured himself that it was easy, provided he took it slowly, and remembered to collapse quietly.

The handkerchief was beginning to adhere to his forehead. To pull it away was the cruellest task. He was absurdly terrified of the result. His hand twice refused to do it.

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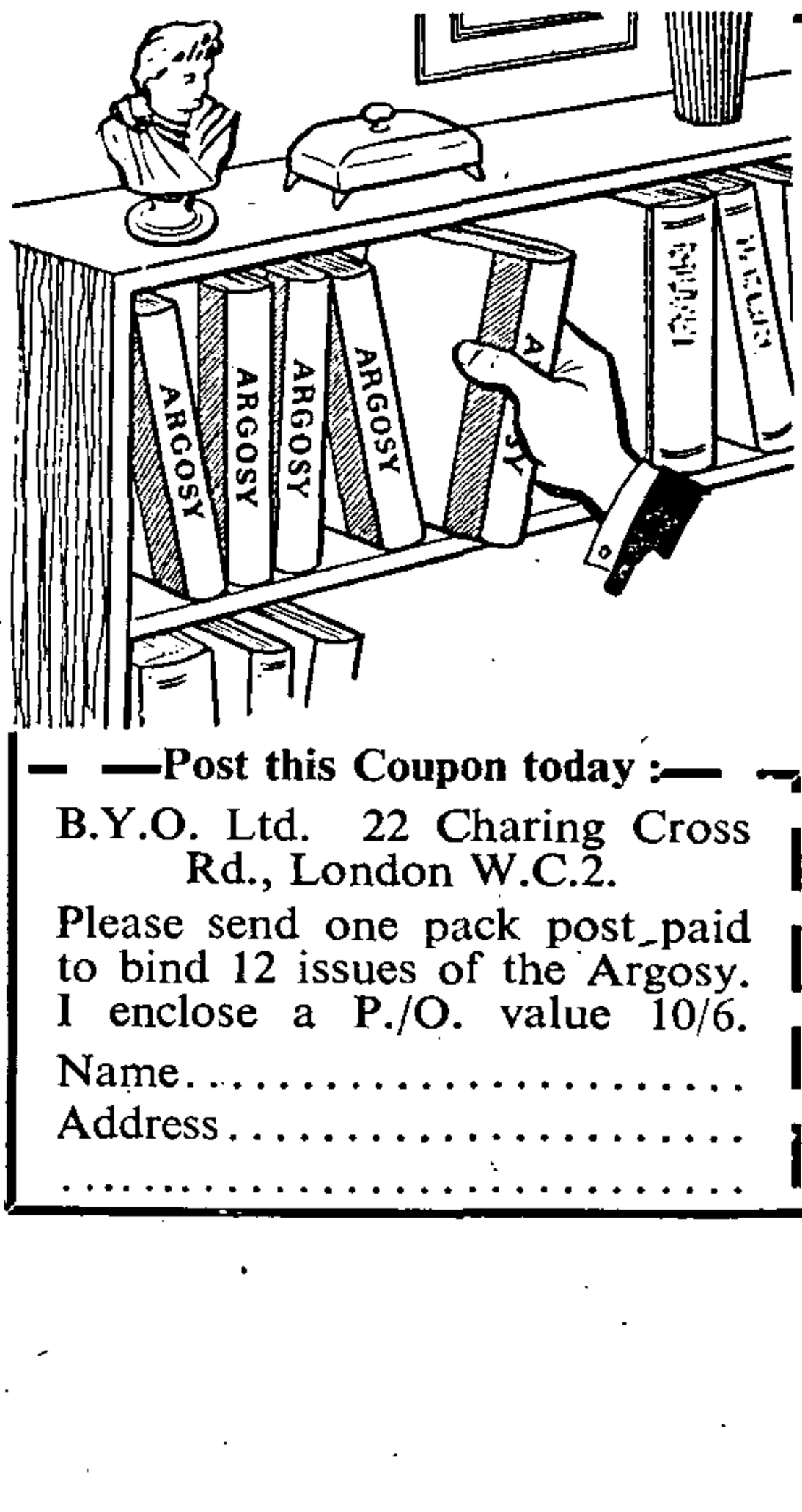

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Nothing wrong with the blood trail now. Spectacular. He forced himself to remember that it was only a surface cut.

He was behind the wall. He bound back the flap of skin and rested. He noticed that his hands could tie a knot of a sort, which gave him more confidence.

It was time for the second move—the move which left no trail at all. The twilight of dawn had come, but there were enough trees to shelter him if St. Sabas was at the barn. And if he wasn't, it was all up anyway.

Dennim rose to his feet and staggered crouching from tree to tree. On the edge of the open he dropped to the ground and squirmed forward into the fold where St. Sabas had charged him. He rolled round into a firing position and fitted the butt to the Mauser. The light suddenly grew very much better. He supposed that he had had another black-out.

There was movement in the copse. What he had vaguely thought was a tree stump moved forward a yard and halted. St. Sabas must be very near the fallen branch. Nothing more was required of him now but a little intelligent guesswork. The tree stump vanished. There was once a faint rustle of leaves.

And then St. Sabas quietly emerged from the copse and began to work his way round it. He was very tired and a little unsteady on his feet; but pity was extinguished as soon as felt. His body, slanting forward, followed the Colt in his right hand as intently as any beast of prey nosing inch by inch into the wind.

Once he stopped and looked over the open hillside. It was a possible shot, but Dennim did not dare to risk the slightest movement of head or barrel in case he vanished back into the trees.

St. Sabas reached the bramble bushes and crouched behind them. Evidently he could not quite see what was or was not behind the scarp of wall. Very cautiously he stood up.

Blood dripped on the backsight. Hopeless. Try again. No, not steady enough. Remember that it doesn't matter now if he turns round. Oh, damn that blood! Right—he's turning now.

It was a little low for the heart, but it would do. St. Sabas spun to the shot, holding his side. The second was lower still. It wouldn't stop a beast; but a man, yes. Men knew what had happened to them. If the first hadn't killed him, the second would keep him quiet. He wouldn't want to move without a dressing on that. Dennim dropped his head on the butt.

It had been a very worrying dream, hunting Mariana or sometimes hunting with Mariana. And policemen. There seemed to be a great deal of open country beyond his toes. And there was a blue peaked cap bending over him and taking up too much sky. An Inspector of police, it was.

"Feeling better, Mr. Dennim?"

He raised a hand. His head was beautifully bandaged. He was covered with a blanket. Somebody raised his shoulders.

"I think so. Flesh wound only, isn't it?"

"Well, yes—if that's what you call *only*."

"He's dead?"

"He's in a bad way. We're waiting for the ambulance. Meanwhile would you care to tell us what happened?"

The uniformed Inspector cleared his throat and shook his head slightly. He was looking kind, but extremely neutral.

Dennim wished the Admiral could be present. The old boy had been far too secretive. It had been plain for some time that either he had not told Special Branch quite enough or Special Branch had not passed it all on to local police.

"You were a long time coming," he said.

"We shouldn't be here now if it wasn't for that stallion of yours rampaging down to the Broadway road. That looked as if something might be wrong, but we didn't know where you were spending the night. We thought you were much farther on, and you never came to tell us, as you said you would. Then we called Scotland Yard who after half an hour gave us a Miss Gallon's address. They said she would know where you were, and she did."

"What did you tell her?"

"Just that we wanted to return the stallion. And I was instructed to let you know that an Admiral Cunobel was on his way."

"How long have you been here?"

"About twenty minutes. It all took time, Mr. Dennim."

A car came bumping slowly over the turf, but it was not the Admiral's. Out of it jumped a fattish man in a duffel coat. Red face, sandy eyebrows, and grey moustache suggested a retired military man of some distinction.

"I say, Callender, what's all this?"

"We're a little doubtful, Sir Thomas," answered the Inspector, "until someone arrives who knows. On the face of it—a case of attempted murder."

"Well, it's all over the place that there's a row of some kind going on. And when they told me that a mare of mine had been picked up halfway to Broadway, I found my guest had never come home. He said he'd be late, so I wasn't bothering till then. Not mixed up in all this, is he?"

"What is his name, sir?"

"The Vicomte de Saint Sabas. Frenchman, of course, but he's as English as you and I."

"Would that be him?"

Dennim felt able to sit up and look round. The policewoman whom he knew and two uniformed constables were leaning over a bundle on the ground.

The new arrival strode over to them, and cried out, "Pierre! Good God!"

St. Sabas appeared to murmur something, and the local magnate came bounding back. "Look here, Callender, what has been going on here? I am a magistrate. I have a right to be told."

"So far as we know, sir, the Vee—the er—your friend was expected to try to injure this gentleman."

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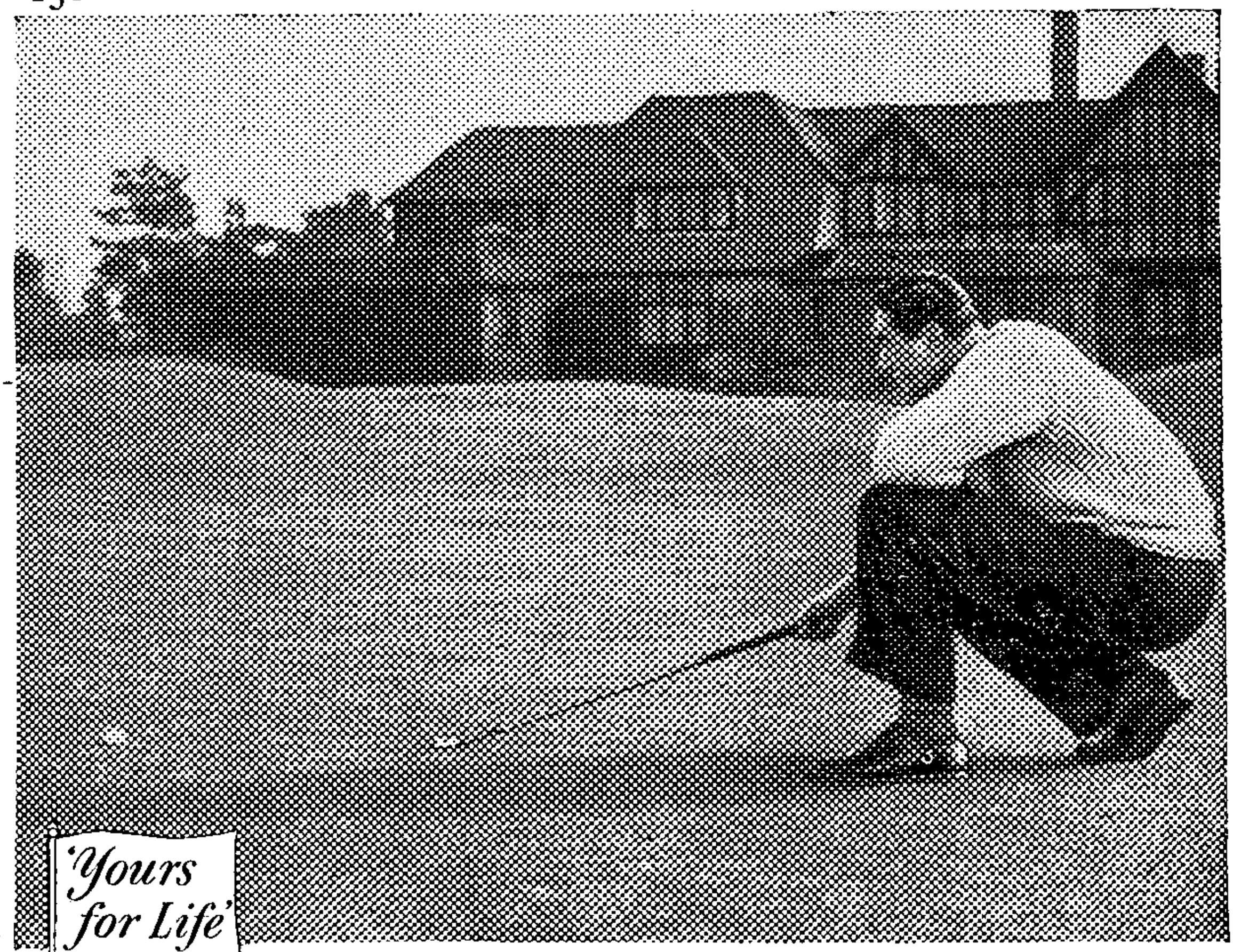

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"St. Sabas? Impossible, my dear man! He was at school with me. Have you charged this fellow?"

"Not yet. I understand that representatives of Scotland Yard and other gentlemen are on their way."

Sir Thomas turned to Dennim. "What have *you* got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing," Dennim answered.

"But you—you may have killed him."

"Quite likely."

"This was a—a duel, what?"

"You could call it that."

"Are you English?"

"More, sir, at any rate, than I was at the start."

"Caution him and take a statement, Inspector!"

"I think we had better be patient just a moment, Sir Thomas," said the Inspector imperturbably.

There was a car in sight, leaping over the turf without any regard at all for government springs. There could be no doubt at all that the Admiral was in it, urging on his driver as if the man was Chief Engineer of a destroyer.

He dashed out of the car, made a commanding gesture to the passengers in the back seat to stay where they were, and ran to Dennim. "Great blood and bones, boy! Not got you, has he?"

"No, sir," said Dennim feebly, for having used up his energy in answering insolence with insolence he was not feeling equal to the Admiral. "Do any explaining you can!"

"I don't know who you are," Sir Thomas interrupted, "but this man has murdered my friend, the Vicomte de Saint Sabas. I insist on him being cautioned and charged."

"St. Sabas? St. Sabas? I used to know his mother well!" Admiral Cunobel looked questioningly at Dennim, who nodded.

"There you are, you see! Didn't I tell you he might be lunching at my club? Damn it, I believe he sometimes does."

"I insist—" began Sir Thomas.

"You bloody fool, sir! Charge him? Charge my aunt! If you want someone to listen to you, there's a carful of cops coming up the hill at this moment with an Assistant Commissioner of Police in it. If he's good enough for you, go and tell your story to him. I'm busy."

He knelt down beside Dennim and eased him back on to the police pillow with surprising tenderness.

"There's not another chap in the world who would have done this without complaining, boy. Now, there's no hurry. You tell me whatever you want to when you want to. Would you like to see your Aunt Georgina, by the way? Your only relative—that's why I brought her along. I didn't know how things might be, eh? Picked up that Gallon girl, too, walking out from Stow-on-the-Wold in the middle of the night. Walking! Got alarmed, she said! Thought Nur Jehan had thrown you, and was coming up to look. Shall I let 'em loose?"

" I'm not a pretty sight." Admiral Cunobel pulled the blanket up to Dennim's chin and beckoned towards the car.

Mariana ran ahead of Georgina. " Well, Charles? " she asked heartily. " Had a spill? "

It was evident that, concentrating on him, she had not taken in the scene at all. She turned pale as she saw the group on the edge of the copse, the serious faces, the blood-stained swabs on the ground. A police sergeant passed, carrying by their barrels wrapped in his handkerchief the Colt and the Mauser.

" So you *were* expecting someone. Oh, my darling, what has happened? " She burst into passionate and noisy tears.

" Mariana, will you please remember where you are? " ordered Georgina. " I take it, Charles, you are not seriously hurt? "

" No, my dear Aunt."

" I am very glad of it. Mariana, there is no necessity to carry on like an Italian widow. Peregrine, you did not prepare me for this. You said that Charles had had a bad fall. I shall speak to you afterwards. I can only hope that you have sufficient authority to get my nephew out of a very awkward position in which, it is perfectly obvious to me, you put him. Mariana, this is most improper. Charles is not a relative of yours."

" I should not have fought at all if not for her."

" Fought? What on earth has *she* got to do with it? And where the devil are the seconds? "

" There weren't any, my dear Aunt. I merely meant that I should have permitted myself to be killed. Mariana, darling, I am not badly wounded."

" It is not that," she answered.

" I know. But don't worry. I shall not even go to trial. The future is all ours, my sweet."

" Charles! " Georgina exclaimed. " You mean—good lord, you and Nur Jehan! Peregrine! "

" Yes, Georgi? "

" I repeat that I do not know what you and my nephew have been up to. But when he comes out of hospital I shall expect his future to be quite as much your concern as Mariana's."

" Yes, Georgi. A Colonel Parrow, who is a large landowner in Buckinghamshire, and I have already discussed the matter . . . Hullo, what do *you* want? "

" The ambulance, sir."

St. Sabas passed, carried on a stretcher.

" Put me down beside that gentleman," he said.

It was a surprisingly clear and definite order. The two bearers hesitated. Dennim sat up and looked at his enemy. His hands were under the blanket. His face was icy white. He tried to smile.

" Please put him down," said Dennim.

" Graf von Dennim, I wanted to say that I believe you. I have lain there thinking about you, knowing that I was going to die. I have had enough to do with officers of the—of the service which duty compelled you to join. They are not men of courage.

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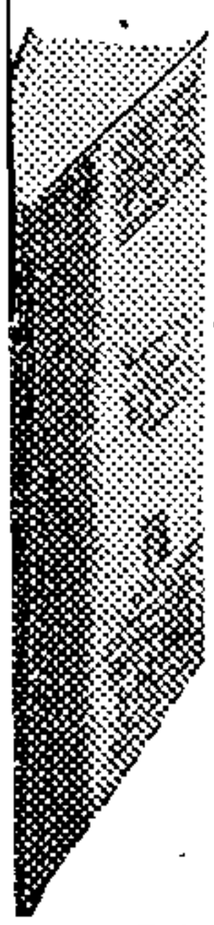

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"An apology is a stupid little word, von Dennim. It belongs to lesser things. I wish to ask you a question. May I?"

"Of course."

"She only walked? She was quite dead?"

"She was already dead, St. Sabas."

"Thank you. You could not know who or what she was, and you were right. I am proud that when she had nothing more to give she could still help. Von Dennim, something you said made me believe you had respect for a name whoever holds it."

"I have."

St. Sabas broke into rapid German. "Then I will dare to appeal to you. I do not want to be saved. Your first shot is in the kidney, I think. But the damned doctors might patch me up for the scaffold yet. Your second shot cut the femoral artery. I put on a tourniquet. They have put on another. I am about to undo it. The result will be obvious if I am lifted off the ground. Please, if you can, keep me with you a moment."

The police Inspector had come over with St. Sabas's host. The evidence of agreement between the two wounded men was overwhelming and suspicious. So was the interest on the faces of the Admiral and Georgina.

"Were you able to follow what was being said, sir?" the Inspector asked.

"Never could understand German," Cunobel lied.

"Look here, Callender," insisted Sir Thomas, "this is a perfectly clear case of attempted murder. There can be no question of both being equally guilty."

"None at all," St. Sabas said. "Take my statement, Inspector, and do not interrupt. I, the Vicomte de Saint Sabas, of Saint Sabas in the Department of Vendée and 155 Halkin Street, London, solemnly declare that I endeavoured to kill—to assassinate—this gentleman, and that he has killed me in self-defence. I confess, too, with bitter shame and regret that it was I who sent the bomb which killed the postman serving his house, and I desire that the welfare of the man's family shall be a first charge upon my estate. If brought to trial, I should plead insanity. I can but trust that death ends it, for me as for my dear wife."

He freed his left hand and held it out to his host. "Will you hold my hand a minute, old friend?"

"Good lord, a postman!"

"Unbelievable, isn't it? Yet—yet I think you may understand, von Dennim."

"I have always understood, Savarin."

St. Sabas drew his bright red right hand from under the blanket, and laid it on the turf between them with the last of his strength. For the few seconds which were left Dennim held it between his own.

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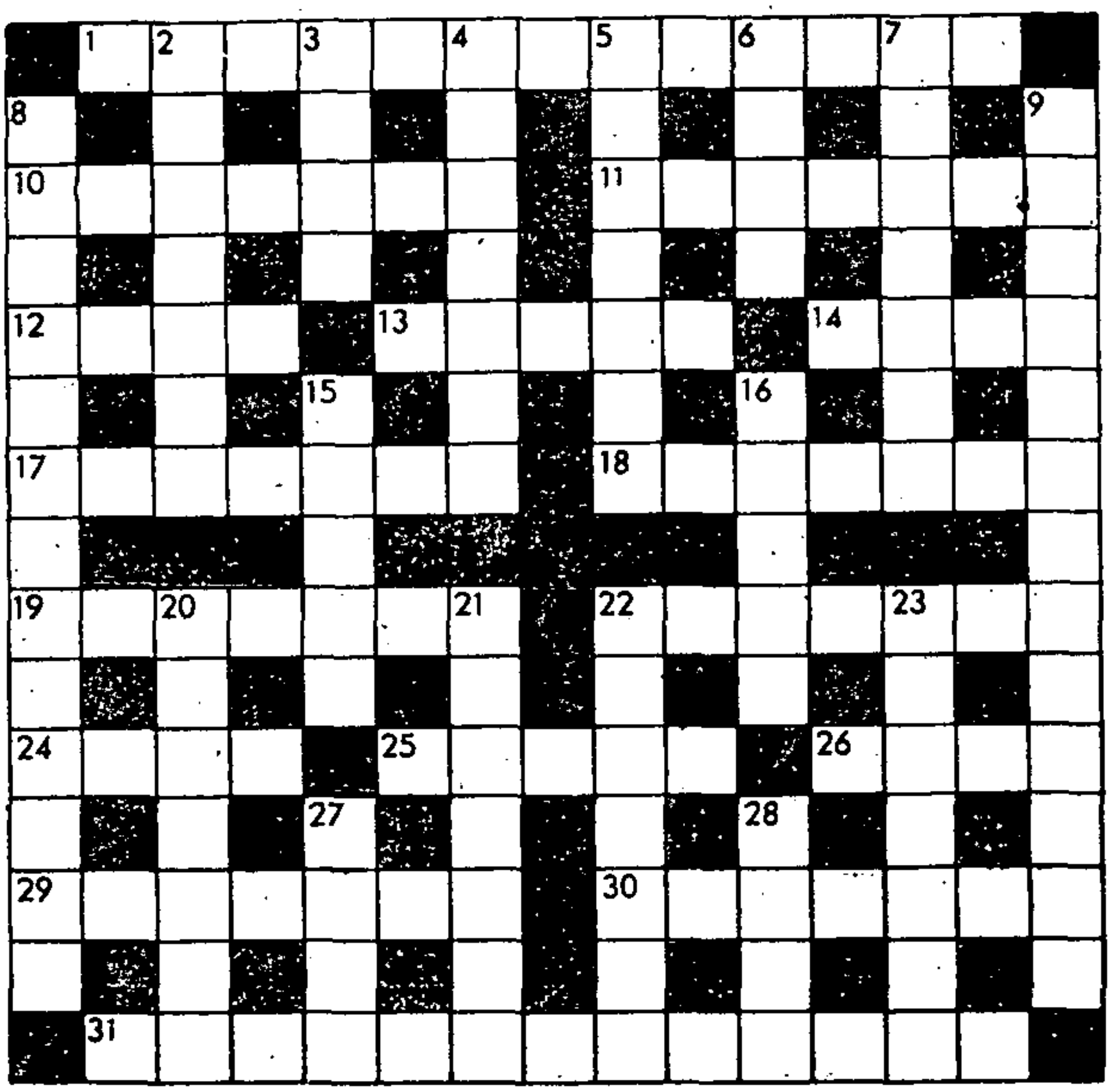
★ *A new novel by Michael Gilbert begins in next month's Argosy on sale September 10*

ARGOSY CROSS-WORD

★

Solution on Page 90

★



CLUES

Across

1 Mardi Gras in other words (6, 7).

10 Relate about Monte Cristo ? (7).

11 Felt ire and became fruitful (7).

12 All the poor dog had (4).

13 Crime of beheaded clergyman (5).

14 Qualifies Brutus and Octopus (4).

17 Secret as a vault ? (7).

18 Man who knows Scottish (7).

19 In name and in Om inalterable (7).

22 First Christian martyr (7).

24 Sea-eagle sounds subject to P.A.Y.E. (4).

25 Next best to bull (5).

26 Almost astir from Italian wine (4).

29 Join with modern harvester (7).

30 I appear thrice in it at first (7).

31 Trifling if I can't at broken inn sign (13).

Down

2 Nag with hay round its broken neck (7).

3 Duty, alas, rests here (4).

4 Distracted fever in Crete (7).

5 Take off the cloth, so to speak (7).

6 They are 14 to many correspondents (4).

7 Ike's home town (7).

8 Excelling tendency about broken crans (13).

9 Here Ben's peril is deplorable (13).

15 What killed 22 across (5).

16 Is broken 15 star of 4 ? (5).

20 Could compete in three-legged race (7).

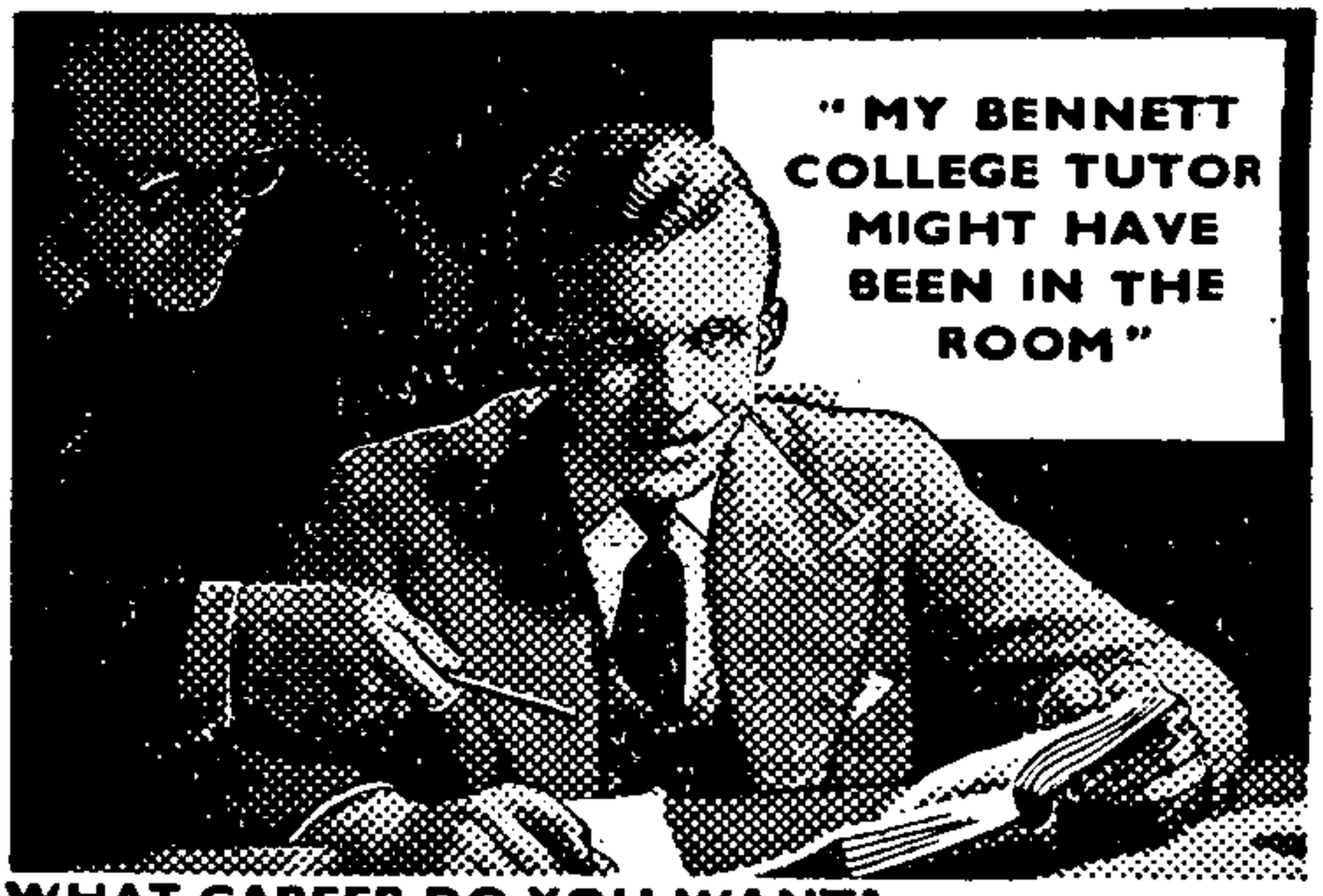
21 With a touch of magic preceded 3D (7)

22 Leads a posse of aldermen! (7).

23 Coarse German stuff (7).

27 Rudolph found her a cool hand (4).

28 Commercially styled spelter (4).



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